



# THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

The Only Publication authorized by the Hon. W.F. Cody (BUFFALO BILL)

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 10.

Price, Five Cents.

## BUFFALO BILL'S BRAVOS

OR  
TRAILING THROUGH THE LAND OF DEATH



WITH FLAMING REVOLVERS AND CLUBBED RIFLES, BUFFALO BILL'S RECKLESS BORDER RANGE MADE A GAP UPON THE SKULKING CHEYENNE





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No. 10.

NEW YORK, July 20, 1901.

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## BUFFALO BILL'S BRAVOS;

OR,

### Trailing Through the Land of Death.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

#### CHAPTER I.

##### BUFFALO BILL'S WARNING.

The night was coming on dark and gloomy, when a man, mounted on a wearied horse, galloped down a cañon in the direction of a burning camp-fire.

As he drew near the light a hoarse voice called out a challenge:

"Halt! who comes thar?"

Following the words came the sound of a gun click, click.

"Hold hard there, comrade, I'm a friend," said the rider in a low voice.

"Easy said—prove it. What's yer handle?" demanded the unseen sentry.

"They call me Buffalo Bill."

"Great Scott! Billy, air it you?"

"Sounds like Blue Jeans."

"That's who it am. Come into the fire an' see the boys."

"I've got something to tell you first. How many are there in camp?" asked the noted scout.

"Let's see—thar's just seventeen in all," replied the man called Blue Jeans.

"And among the lot have you a man with one eye that squints?"

"Yes."

"His name is Tom Landers?"

"That's just it."

"Know anything about him, Blue Jeans?"

"Nothing particular. Some of us is strangers to the others, but we're all bent on one object."

"Yes, I know. Listen to me—that squint-eyed man has sold you out."

"Death and furies! Air it so, Billy?"

"I came here to warn you. This very night death will hover over your camp."

"'Twill, eh?" Well, now that we're warned, perhaps we kin make a show. Go on, ole hoss, proceed."



"Who's your captain?"

"Big-Foot Wallace."

"A better man neved lived. Can you get him out here without Landers seeing you?"

"Easy."

With the word, Blue Jeans uttered a whistle of peculiar call. It could easily have been taken for the cry of a night bird in its flight.

A minute passed.

"Thar he comes," and a huge figure was outlined between the fire and themselves.

"What's the racket, Blue Jeans?" growled a voice.

"Come closer, ole man. Here's a man as has come to warn us ag'in the reds."

"Who kin recommend him?"

"He speaks for himself, Big-Foot Wallace."

"What! I know that voice—Bill Cody!"

"No other, old man. There, not so fierce a grip. I don't forget your squeeze of old."

"What's up, Bill?"

"Danger in the air."

"Reds?"

"Yes, and whites, too; for there's been a sort of combine between the border pests under the half-breed dog, Canada Bill, and the Cheyenne chief, Prairie Dog."

"That's bad. What's ther nature o' ther combine—ter sweep ther border?"

"First of all to wipe out your band."

"That's odd. What have we done ter rile 'em?"

Buffalo Bill bent closer to him.

"They know what you're after, Wallace."

"Air it possible?"

"And they have sworn to leave your bones on the trail. Worse than that, they have a spy in your camp—a wretch capable of murdering you all while you sleep."

"That explains it."

"What?"

"Why, jest when Blue Jeans giv thet whistle I war seein' somethin' thet kinder staggered me."

"Explain, old man."

"Thar's a spring over yonder, whar we git our water, but as it air a leetle off, we hev a bucket o' drinkin' water in camp."

"I seen a man take it thar, an' havin' my suspicions, I follered him. Dash my hide, wot d'ye think he did—took a paper outen his pocket, emptied some white powder inter ther bucket, stirred it around with a stick, an' then started back fur ther camp."

"That man was—"

"Tom Landers."

"He's a traitor. Wallace, don't waste a minute—some one might drink—it may be poison he put in the bucket."

"Then come along, Bill. We'll do it."

The three walked hastily into the camp. Blue Jeans stood guard over the water bucket, while the others looked around for the man who was accounted a spy.

He seemed to have disappeared.

His guilty mind might have seen trouble ahead as soon as he placed the white powder in the drinking water.

Buffalo Bill was passing through the camp, when he chanced to come across a spot where the shadows fell.

Some of the baggage had been thrown here, and in the midst of this he saw a man crouching.

There was something about the fellow's attitude that looked suspicious.

He seemed to be hiding, and at the same time watching those near the fire eagerly. A group of men had by this time gathered around the guardian of the water bucket, asking questions.

Buffalo Bill was a man of action.

In a second he had grasped the man by the throat and dragged him near the fire.

Big-Foot Wallace came running up.

"Thet's ther critter, Bill. Whar did ye find him?"

"Hovering in the shadow, watching the crowd here," and the scout shook the wretch until his teeth rattled.

By this time the whole camp had been made aware of the fact that they had a spy in their midst.

"String him up!"

"Riddle the critter with lead!"

"Hold on, boyees, let's make ther doctor take ees own medicine," and as Big-Foot Wallace spoke he raised a dipper of water from the bucket.

No sooner did Landers see this act than he struggled like a crazy man.

"Not that! Merciful Heavens, not that!" he almost shrieked, and as one arm became disengaged he struck the dipper, spilling its contents.

Big-Foot Wallace stooped to gather more of the suspicious fluid, but, following up his success, the prisoner made a kick, upset the bucket, and all was lost.

His actions convicted him in the eyes of these rough but shrewd border men.

Big-Foot Wallace called out:

"Bring a rope, some un. We'll give him his deserts right speedy."

A rope was placed in the hands of the captain.

He made a loop in it, as though quite used to this sort of thing.

"Gentlemen o' ther jury, air ther jury agreed on a verdict 'cording ter ther evidence?"

"We are," came the response.

"Wot is yer idee?"

"Guilty."

"An' ther punishment?"

"Death by the rope."

"Bruce Radway, toss this hyar rope over yonder dead tree that sticks out from ther rocks."

A young man stepped out, and with the skill of an accomplished lariat thrower, cast the rope as directed. The border gallows was ready for its victim.

"Tie his hands ahind him."

Buffalo Bill had been holding the already half-strangled wretch in a grip of iron.

Some of the others now caught hold of Landers and fastened his hands back of him.

"Just give him one minute, boys," said Buffalo Bill, holding up his hand. "Now, Tom Landers, before you go tell the truth. Are you guilty of entering into a conspiracy against us?"

The man might have endeavored to save himself, but with those magnetic eyes holding his will in subjection he could only obey and tell the truth.

"Yes," he groaned.

The men drew the rope tighter, but Buffalo Bill's hand stayed it.

"One more question—Tom Landers, you are about to



die—tell the truth with your last breath. What was that you put in the water bucket?"

His lips parted and he almost whispered the one word: "Arsenic!"

From the group of men arose a cry of fury.

Buffalo Bill removed his restraining hand. The rope tightened. One groan was heard, and then only the scraping of the hangman's rope over the branch of the blasted tree above.

Buffalo Bill looked up.

"Not a shot, not a shout," said Big-Foot Wallace, quickly, "thar ain't no tellin' whar ther reds may be. Leave ther critter thar. Every man look arter his traps an' git ready ter leave."

There immediately arose the hum of busy preparation. Buffalo Bill and Wallace stood talking near the fire.

The former quickly related how he had by accident learned of the contemplated raid upon the camp of the bold travelers, and, jaded though his horse had been, he immediately set out, hoping to reach them before it was too late.

With such men forewarned was forearmed.

The traitor in the camp had been more dangerous than all else.

Horses were saddled and all camp utensils stowed away, and in a very brief space of time.

Glancing up at the figure dangling from the blasted oak, Buffalo Bill could see no movement.

Now came the next order of Wallace.

"Douse ther glim thar. Out with ther fire."

Ready feet kicked the brands right and left, and this served to entirely kill the blaze.

The guards had been notified as to what was going on, and warned to keep a close watch.

At this moment, just as Big-Foot Wallace was about to utter the signal that would call them in, a whistle was heard from the left bank.

"Thet means danger," said the leader, grimly.

"Who's up there?"

"An ole hoss ye knows, Billy. What's trampled these plains sence a boy. Ole Bob Becket."

"He's true blue, sure. Listen to that, man!"

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TRAIL OF FIRE.

From the height above had come the sudden discharge of a rifle, and with the report rang out a yell such as could only fall from the lips of a death-stricken red-skin.

Bob Becket had found his man, and there were more. According to orders, the old man as soon as he had fired, dropped down the rocks and speedily joined his companions.

The sentinel on the other bank did the same, and each man mounted his horse, leaving one over, the one Tom Landers had ridden. Buffalo Bill bestrode it, leading his own steed.

They rode down the cañon, for it seemed to be free for their passage.

With such enemies hovering near, they could not reach the outlet of the cañon any too soon.

They endeavored to move as quietly as possible, not wishing to draw the attention of any enemies above, but cries were heard, and then came flashes of fire and the report of guns, but fired at random.

Those that fired could not see a sign of the horse-men, but various sounds gave them an idea as to the position of the enemy.

The bullets rattled around in a way that was decidedly unpleasant, and torches began to drop through space, as though the Indians hoped to light up the gulch, so that they might use their weapons with more fatal effect.

"Faster—pass ther word along," said the leader.

The horses were urged on.

It was a weird spectacle, and to add to its strangeness the torches had set fire to dead grass growing among the rocks, so that the darkness was dispelled in their rear.

As yet not a shot had been fired by the band of men thus making their way along the cañon.

They were saving their ammunition for the time when every shot would pay.

Darkness hindered their progress, but at the same time it saved them from murderous volleys that were ready to be poured down upon them from the heights.

"Get ready ter dismount an' fight fur ther openin'," said Wallace.

As the enemy had kept up with them, they would undoubtedly wait for their coming at the mouth of the little cañon.

Buffalo Bill suggested a plan which the leader of the little force eagerly seized upon.

Should the Indians entrench themselves at the head of the small gully their position must be one of advantage.

At the point where the gully ran into the cañon, a dozen men sprang from their horses, which were taken in charge by those who still remained mounted.

Rifles in hand, this squad began to move up the small ravine, while the horses kept on down the gulch.

It deceived even the keen-witted Cheyennes, who were so well versed in trickery.

They supposed that Big-Foot Wallace and his men were keeping on, and abandoning the position they had taken up.

Stones, purposely dislodged from the top came crashing down, striking other loose rocks on the way, perhaps, and causing quite an avalanche in the rear of the horses.

Meanwhile the dozen men, among whom were Buffalo Bill, Wallace and Blue Jeans, crept like tigers up the small gulch.

It had been so intensely dark in the cañon, and their eyes had become so accustomed to it, that as they drew nearer the level of the prairie their surroundings became almost light to them.

The Indians seemed to be in every direction, for their cries could be heard.

It was, of course, the intention of the whites to take a stand among the rocks, and hold the reds at bay until their horses could be brought up.

Among these self-same rocks they found numerous skulking Cheyennes, and to dislodge them at once opened fire, at the same time rushing forward.

Their sweep was irresistible, and the Indians who had



not gone down before that hailstorm of bullets fled in alarm as they found a band of reckless border rangers bearing upon them with flaming revolvers and rifles.

The victory was only temporary, for upon hearing these sounds of warfare the Indians in all directions turned toward that point.

Expecting such a rush, the prairie men, seeking cover, awaited the onslaught.

The light increased with each passing minute, but, though the illumination appeared to be coming from the east, it could not mean dawn.

Ah, the moon was about to rise.

This would be a blessing to Big-Foot Wallace and his men. It would bring about the death of many a Cheyenne brave.

From all quarters they rushed toward the pile of rocks, and a rifle sounded.

Buffalo Bill had caught sight of the foremost brave, and knocked him over.

That fatal rifle seldom sounded without accomplishing the result intended.

Now other guns chimed in, and the battle was on.

Bullets whistled and hummed through the air or flattened against the rocks with dull "spat" that spoke of murderous designs balked.

The tactics of the Cheyennes quickly changed. It was not in their nature to attack such a fortress boldly.

Dropping flat wherever they might chance to be, they continued to fire upon their foes, creeping closer all the while.

The moon trailed into view, shorn of her rounded edge, but for all that her power of illumination was great.

As if inspired by some power unseen, the Indians made a mad assault, and deafening yells arose.

It would have chilled the marrow in the bones of many men, but these old rangers had met the foe on battle-fields before, and greeted him with a volley.

Following this, they opened with their revolvers, and sent such a hurricane of lead into the midst of the red braves that the ardor of their advance was chilled, and the attack was a failure.

As mysteriously as they had arisen into view, the Cheyennes vanished.

As yet the loss had been wholly with them. The men with Wallace, sheltered behind the rocks, had received very little injury.

One had a wound in his arm, but he paid no attention to it after wrapping a bandana handkerchief around the member.

A second had lost the lobe of his ear, but was only too glad the same bullet had not penetrated his brain.

Taking advantage of the lull in the storm, all discharged weapons were reloaded.

A messenger had been sent below, to the men who brought the horses up, and the animals were tethered in the ravine near the top. Thus five more men were added to their number to hold the fort.

Big-Foot Wallace saw how the ground must be held, and he stationed his men so as to command both sides of the ravine.

What they wanted to do was to hold this position until morning.

Then, with fresh horses, they could set out upon the journey, regardless of the presence of these wily foes.

Although the open assault of the Indians had proved a failure, none of the rangers had the least idea the matter had been given up by their enemies.

The red man resembles the wolf. He prefers to fight with the odds in his favor.

The moon wheeled higher in the heavens.

Men never blessed her light more fervently than did the braves of the border trail, the rangers who, under the lead of Buffalo Bill and Big-Foot Wallace, were banded to accomplish that which they had set out to perform.

"Look! the red fiends are at it, Wallace!"

As he spoke the buffalo hunter pointed to where they could be seen sparks of fire whirling around. They were torches in the hands of the Cheyennes, almost half a mile away from the rocks.

It was not to signal that these torches were waving this way and that, dipping now and then. They left a trail of fire behind them.

The Indians were firing the prairie grass.

They hoped to burn or smoke their foes out from their lodging place among the rocks.

The breeze had become strong with the rising of the moon, and the dry prairie grass served as so much tinder. Quickly a wall of vivid flame, leaping furiously upward, was rushing toward the rocks. Everything in its way seemed doomed to destruction.

"Look after ther hosses!" came the voice of Big-Foot Wallace above the snapping and roaring of the fire, "we lose 'em we're goners, you bet!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BRAVOS AT BAY.

His words were hardly necessary.

The men present had seen service in the field against the cunning Indians, and this secret mission into the heart of the hostile country was but one of many campaigns.

Already the animals were showing signs of alarm, sniffing the smoke-laden air with peculiar snorts and wild eyes.

These same horses had during the evening sniffed the smoke of the camp-fire frequently, but they seemed to know the difference.

Onward rolled the flames.

In themselves they were hardly dreaded by the whites at bay.

The rocks among which they had taken their stand would protect them.

It was the smoke that gave them the most trouble, and threatened to choke them.

Vast volumes were driven ahead by the breeze, sweeping low down.

A number of men threw themselves flat upon the ground.

The men took their handkerchiefs, wet them from their canteens and spread them over their faces.

There was one consolation—it must soon be over, for the fire was close to the rocks, though they could feel its fierce heat.

Thankful were they to know the friendly piles



stone were between, for had the blaze spread over them it must have left death in its wake.

There was one furious blaze—a shriveling moment of heat—and when it was done, for the fire had leaped the ravine.

The wind carried the sparks across the gully and dropped them amid the dead grass on the other side.

Away went the new fire, gaining strength as it flew.

It would not go more than a mile before its course would be checked by a new line of rocks, and here the fire must die.

No sooner had the flames leaped the small ravine and resumed their mad whirl than the horses were again left to their lariats; something else calling for their attention, as it was doubtless the intention of the wily reds to follow up the bank of fire.

Perhaps under its cover they could catch their desperate enemies napping.

They gave Buffalo Bill and his comrades too small credit for shrewdness.

Expecting such a thing, each man was on the lookout, as well as his smoke-dimmed eyes would admit.

Soon a rifle sounded.

The redskins learned that their enemies had not been harmed by the fire, and seemed to be in a condition to handle them.

Hence, they were exceedingly cautious.

A few got a lodging among some of the outer rocks, but it did them little good.

With the moon shining so brightly they could neither advance nor retreat.

There they lay, virtually prisoners.

Of course, the presence of these Indians gave some annoyance, since no one could expose himself without being subject to their fire.

Big-Foot Wallace left it with his men, several of whom crept forward and sought to close with the hidden Cheyennes.

Whenever it was known that a redskin was in hiding, these men would cover all approaches to the spot.

Then one of their number would drop rocks over the boulder behind which the Indian lay, seeking to dislodge him.

When he could stand being thus peppered no longer the fellow would seek to crawl away or else roll off, thinking to thus avoid being shot.

This was what the border sharpshooters were waiting for.

Their rifles would sound, and it meant death every time.

Thus they cleaned out those who had, unfortunately for themselves, found a lodgment among the rocks.

Had the warriors of Prairie Dog given up the battle? It was not their way.

They had met with heavy losses, and as yet had nothing to show for it; but revenge was natural to them, and they would risk much to gain it.

Those upon the edge of the ravine began to suspect something, and one of them hunted up the leader, to whom he mentioned his suspicions.

"I reckon thar be reds down in the cañon, sence I scented 'em thar," he declared.

Possibly some falling stone had attracted his atten-

tion, and upon watching he had discovered other evidence that went to prove the truth of his suspicion.

Big-Foot Wallace thought enough of the man's report to pick out half a dozen from among the rangers and send them into the ravine with orders to spread out below the horses and watch for any signs of the wily redskins.

Hardly had they gone into the ravine than the rapid firing and wild shouts announced that they had found the enemy much sooner than any of them had thought possible.

Just as they reached the spot where the horses were tethered, dark forms appeared on the other side of the little corral.

The rangers became stock-still, and, crouching, waited for the reds to come closer.

Then suddenly rang out the rifle shot, the quick percussion of blows as hand-to-hand these mortal foes battled for victory.

It was a characteristic scene, of fierce warfare of the border.

Slowly, but surely, the tide of civilization has swept the redman back from the Atlantic. Now, his only homes in the far West are being invaded, and by the time another century rolls around he will be but a myth in this fair country.

It was, perhaps, fortunate that only a small number of Indians had descended the wall of the cañon, in order to steal this march upon the whites.

They had supposed the whole force of the whites was arrayed against them, and, although fighting furiously, they sought the first opportunity to escape by plunging into the depths of the ravine.

It was a fierce little engagement while it lasted, wounds being given and received.

By the time reinforcements reached the scene of action from the rocks above, it was about all over, and the Indians had fled.

After this a couple of guards were stationed below the horses, with strict orders to keep their eyes open for anything in the shape of an Indian coming up the ravine.

The night was slowly wearing away.

Perhaps the determined redskins might attempt still another scheme yet.

At length the gray light appeared in the east.

It was at this time a last fierce assault was made upon their position from the combined forces of the redskins and their white allies.

The shout of more than one white man was heard in the attacking lines, and close watch was kept, for it would have pleased them more to have laid over one of these prairie outlaws than even a couple of the Cheyennes.

They seemed to know this.

There was a tremendous amount of firing and much shouting, but the allies had already tasted the mettle of the white rangers crouching among the rocks, and they did not hanker after another experience in a hurry.

The firing ceased, the sounds of battle died away, and men lay groaning upon the ground, where they had fallen.

Most of the rangers were hardened men, to whom a dead Indian was the only good Indian.

Those who had been wounded among their own number, they were very solicitous about; but an Indian was



not worth going to any trouble over. Bruce Radway and another young man had not so hardened their hearts.

When morning came and there was no danger of being ambushed by prowling Indians, they went out to see what could be done.

The first man they came to had been shot through the body and was slowly dying.

Bruce, bending over, sustained him with his arm, while the other held a canteen of water to his lips, which looked parched.

No doubt the fellow expected to be scalped. This way of treating one's foes was beyond his comprehension.

He looked up into the faces of the whites with a stare of wonder.

"See there," said Bruce.

Another wounded Indian, shot through the hips, lay not thirty feet away.

He had a gun in his hands, and at the moment of observation the fellow had been in the act of firing at them.

When he realized what they were doing the gun fell from his nerveless hands.

Such generosity on the part of enemies was something he could not understand, but it influenced him not to murder one of them.

When they handed him the canteen of water he drank with feverish eagerness.

Not so a third fellow.

This man was the last they could see lying wounded.

As Bruce bent over to give him a drink, this vicious wretch, foaming at the mouth, suddenly reared himself on one arm, and, grasping a keen blade, made a savage blow at him.

Providence directed the knife between his arm and body, saving his life.

His companion raised his gun, and would have dashed the wretch's brains out had not Bruce Radway restrained him.

"I'm not hurt. Let him alone. He'll die, anyhow. See there's Blue Jeans beckoning. I reckon breakfast must be ready. Then we'll mount and away."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### IN THE LAND OF FOES.

Fires had been started and breakfast was ready when the two young men reached the camp among the rocks.

The rangers were not over-merry, for a number had received wounds.

All of them realized the desperate nature of their strange mission into the Indian country.

There was a strong chance that they would not get back, whether successful or not, without serious difficulties with their enemies.

These chances had been taken into consideration, however, before they started.

Although generally grave, they had no fear.

Men of their calling hardly know the meaning of the word in its general sense.

On one of the highest rocks Buffalo Bill stood with Wallace and Blue Jeans.

They were discussing their prospects and laying plans for their future guidance.

Buffalo Bill had, after some urging, consented to cast his lot with the rest.

This pleased them all, for the young buffalo hunter was a great favorite, and already his name had become famous.

They swept the horizon with a field glass, which had been presented to Bill by his pards.

It was a fine instrument, and by its aid they readily located the Indians.

Big-Foot Wallace laughed.

"By ther holy smoke, ther fools act as though they meant ter cut off our escape," he said.

"Sure enough, they are in two parties. The question is, will they dart out on us?"

"I hope so. We'll teach 'em a lesson they never will forgit. Daylight are better than night for gettin' in work wid rifles, an' if ther boyees kain't make them reds jest jump I miss my guess now."

They soon mapped out their course, and the order was: "To horse!"

Every man sprang into the saddle.

Buffalo Bill, on his own horse, which had entirely recovered from the utter fatigue that had marked it on the preceding night.

Around them lay the dead Indians. At least seven were in sight, and others must be lying among the rocks or in the gully.

A puff of smoke, a sudden shot, and the bullet cut a lock from the head of Buffalo Bill.

All turned in the direction whence this sudden and unexpected discharge had come, to see the wounded Cheyenne raise himself on one arm—knowing his last minute had come—and give a fierce war whoop.

It was drowned in the rattle of several guns. The reckless Indian rolled over. He would never again fire a shot. Death had come with the rush of an electric bolt.

Their course was back along the edge of the cañon for a time. They had several reasons for going by this trail, one of which was the fact that by working into the teeth of the wind they would sooner reach grass for the horses.

As they reached a certain spot, one of the men pulled up.

His horse stood like a statue on the very edge of the precipice.

Leaning forward, the man could look down, and he uttered an exclamation.

Bruce Radway, attracted by this, also looked over, and recognized the spot.

It was the scene of their previous night's camp. Yes, there were the remains of the camp-fire scattered about, and the stakes to which their horses had been fastened.

Directly below was the blasted oak, to the knarled branch of which they had strung up the detected traitor spy, Tom Landers.

Part of the rope still hung there swaying in the breeze, but it held no form.

Below, the rocks could be plainly seen, but there was no sign of the man they had hung.

Had the rope broken?

Perhaps a knife in the hand of an Indian had cut it, or by a mere chance a passing bullet fired into the cañon severed it.



One thing was sure—the traitor no longer hung from the blasted oak.

Whether dead or alive he was gone.

They rode on after their companions, comparing notes about this strange thing.

Remembering his diabolical work in attempting to poison them all, they hoped, unless it was when a rifle could be brought to bear upon him, they would not again see him.

They had now gone a mile, when again Indians appeared in a threatening manner.

"Head fer 'em. Every man get ready to give ther devils warm lead," cried Wallace.

His men sprang out like a fan, and thundered forward.

The Indians gazed as if stupefied. Some grew restless. They could be seen looking around as if to make sure that the coast was clear.

A few guns were fired, and the bullets tore up the ground in front of the on-rushing rangers, or else whizzed past.

All at once a panic took place among the redskins.

They turned and fled in all directions, each man seeming to vie with his fellow in the rapidity with which they urged their horses on.

There was no desire to chase them, and so all rode on.

One warrior disdained to fly.

Seated on his steed, he folded his arms and awaited the coming of the whites.

They passed him by without firing, for which the old warrior was no doubt thankful.

He urged his pony after them when they had gone some distance, shouting defiance and brandishing his gun in the air.

When one of the rangers twisted around in the saddle and raised his rifle, it was astonishing how quickly the brave fled forward upon his pony's neck and remained flat.

Having scattered the redskins, the little band sped on, heading toward the distant foothills.

It was probably the first time any considerable number of honest white men had ever invaded this Indian country, unless during the times of the old trapper brigades.

Their presence would soon be signaled from hilltop to hilltop.

They might find some of the Indians friendly, while others, like the braves of Prairie Dog, would hunt them with deadly designs.

More than the Indians, they had reason to keep a close watch for the desperadoes who flocked to this country, because here they were safe from the laws of civilization.

Canada Bill had gathered a score or more of these rascals under his leadership, and for a long time they had been the scourge of the frontier.

Many terrible crimes were laid at their doors, and the half was not told, for there were times when no one was left to tell the story; and again their deeds of violence were done in the disguise of Indians.

The strange mission of Big-Foot Wallace and his men was connected with these outlaws.

During the morning they rode on, and the Indians followed far in the rear, as though they had been taught a

lesson by the rough handling already received, and meant to join caution with their future actions.

With his glass Buffalo Bill located them.

He believed they would have future trouble with Prairie Dog and his braves.

They were here to fight, and prepared to meet even an overwhelming number of Indians.

Upon the back of a horse was a small but heavy article wrapped in cloth.

This was nothing more nor less than a small mountain howitzer, which, when loaded properly and fired into a body of foes, must produce something of a panic.

At noon a halt was made, a quick dinner was dispatched, and the ride was resumed, but slowly.

Just at dusk the foothills were reached.

They rode along, making a meal from dried meats, with which they had come well provided.

Reaching a spring and creek, the horses were allowed to drink their fill, and every man replenished his canteen.

Darkness had set in fully, so that one could not see ten feet away, and this was what they were waiting for.

Now, it was upon the back trail, along the foot of the hills, and trending southwest.

As the ground was soft and spongy, being covered with green turf, they gave no indication of their presence.

Unless some misfortune brought them into personal contact with the men they wished to avoid, the latter would be following an imaginary trail into the northwest, nor would they be likely to discover their mistake until some time after moonrise.

Our friends hoped to have accomplished their bold mission by that time.

As silent as so many spectres they rode on, two and two.

The hills arose on the right, their craggy heights outlined against the heavens.

On the other hand, they could look upon a sea of darkness.

Once a halt was called to breathe the horses and listen, in order to discover whether any suspicious sounds could be heard.

Nothing reached their ears, save the wind up on the hillsides, or the weird cry of nightbirds in the gulches.

Again they rode on, looking like a procession of spectres, for, save an occasional snort from one of the horses, not a sound came from the double column.

Big-Foot Wallace and Buffalo Bill rode ahead, and consulted in low tones.

All the while they kept their eyes open for a certain cañon, which was used as a thoroughfare by the border desperadoes in going to or from their settlement.

This was situated in a peculiar basin, in the heart of the hills.

Terrible stories were told of the cruelties practiced here by Canada Bill and his demon crew.

Few had ever seen the place, which was appropriately if roughly called Hell's Kitchen, for the reason that its inmates were never allowed to escape.

More than one man among these border heroes, so silently heading for this den among the hills, had lost some relative or friend at the hands of these ruffians, and willingly had they joined in the crusade against their power when Big-Foot Wallace was hunting for a party



to carry out some desperate scheme for which he had been engaged.

"Thar it air," he said, suddenly.

## CHAPTER V.

### CANADA BILL'S RETREAT.

On their right was a peculiar formation—it seemed to be a crooked gulley leading upward.

There were certain distinguishing signs about it that told the ranger leader he had made no mistake.

"We go up hyar. Pass ther word along ter be mighty keerful, an' let a couple o' ther boys scout ahead," were his orders.

The double line entered the gulley, and found it like a road.

The rocks gave their horses a firm footing, and the walls of the cañon were never less than a dozen feet apart.

They could see nothing below but a sea of vast darkness, while looking above, at times, they had a glimpse of the crest.

Once they halted to breathe their horses, and had it been daylight, they could have had a view of the prairie for many miles.

Now all that could be seen was a dot of fire far away on the plain.

"A camp-fire," remarked Buffalo Bill.

"I reckon," said Wallace.

They turned and once more led the line up the black cañon, where one could not even see his hand in front of his face.

They had not gone more than twenty lengths further when a signal whistle was heard.

"Halt!"

This signal came from one of the two men who had been sent forward in advance.

"Captain," came a voice just ahead of his horse's head, and a peculiar sound was heard as of some one dragging a heavy body.

"Hello, thar! Is that you, Blue Jeans?"

"Yes."

"What's ther row?"

"We got him."

"Who's thet?"

"A sentry as was posted here. We seen him a lightin' his pipe, an' jest jumped the critter."

"White?"

"Yep."

Wallace bent over in his saddle.

"Did ye stick him, Jeans?"

"Bob wanted to the worst kind, but I thort as how you'd like to ask him a few questions afore we shut off his wind."

"'Tain't much use. He'd lie as like as not, an' any way we couldn't depend on what he sez. Better use him up."

The wretch heard and struggled to free himself in order to beg for his life; but the iron hands of Blue Jeans held him firmly, for the ranger would not risk the chance of the fellow giving the alarm—all their lives might pay the penalty.

"Just as you say, cap. Here, Bob, whar are ye?"

The sound of a blow was heard.

"That fur my brother Dave," gritted the avenger.

It was a terrible deed, but seemed necessary for their preservation. Besides, these border desperadoes deserved no consideration. They had been guilty of every crime.

The men rode on.

As yet there had been no alarm either from the plain below or the hills above.

These grim avengers swept aside all difficulties and made their point.

Their object was not wholly vengeance, for they came also to save.

There were captives in the village of the border desperadoes, whose chains they would break.

The crest of the hill was just before them, and when his men had gathered around, Big-Foot Wallace issued his last orders in a low but stern tone!

He glanced down at the black sea of space—away along the foot of the hills.

"Just as I 'spected, Billy, ther raskils hev lit torches an' air lookin' up our trail."

"Thank Heaven! it's too late, Wallace."

"Ter do them any good—yas. Let 'em come on. We'll pounce on ther houses hyar like hawks. Ready—foller me."

A trail led down into the basin, where the houses of the white refugees, together with a score of Indian tepees, marked the outlaw settlement. Here a number of lights could be seen, fires burning, and other signs that indicated the presence of quite a community.

The seventeen avengers formed themselves into a body, and then their horses were launched down the declivity like a thunderbolt.

It was as though an avalanche had started at the top of the divide, and was thundering down with unerring swiftness in a direct line for the strange town.

Forms could be seen by the fires, though the hour was comparatively early.

Of course, they heard the thunder of hoofs, but some mistook the sound for a distant storm, while those who recognized the clatter of horses' hoofs supposed it must be their comrades returning in a body, hence none were alarmed.

Here in this fastness of the wilderness, they had made their fort and built their cabins, some of logs, others in Mexican style of adobes, or sun-burned bricks.

It would have taken a regiment of soldiers to have stormed those heights with the desperate horde on top to defend them.

Security of this kind begets carelessness. They had a sentry in the pass, and relied on him to warn them of approaching danger.

And now the terror of war, which they had brought upon many a border settlement, was come to their own. They would be made to feel what it meant to have blood run in their streets and the avenger in their midst.

Nearer came the awful roar.

There was something about it that began to surprise some of those who heard.

Still, not one of them suspected the awful truth, which at the very last moment broke upon them like a thunder-clap.

Out of the dense gloom came the horsemen.

They had spread out like a fan, so that as they ad-



vanced upon the doomed village, it looked like double the force that actually existed.

At sight of them the first few men were panic-stricken. They could not even shout, so great was the fear that had swept over them, almost paralyzing their muscles.

Nothing stayed the rush of the avengers.

Now they were at the border of the strange camp. The first shot was fired, and a man shouted out his pain as he felt the hot lead burn his flesh.

The shot seemed a signal.

As they struck the lodges, the border men separated. Each man went as he pleased, but all riding through the settlement, shooting right and left, shouting, casting burning brands into tepees and cabins, and creating such a tempest as had never before been known on the frontier.

Every man they sighted, be he red or white, was cut or shot down. Not one was spared.

It may be readily understood that the utmost confusion ensued. A reign of terror came over the outlaw settlement, such as had never been known before.

In the midst of this intense excitement three of the rangers kept together.

They were Wallace, Buffalo Bill, and the young man whose heart had actually prompted him to give a wounded Indian a drink, Bruce Radway.

They had an object in view, for their actions proved it.

Straight through the village they dashed, heading for some particular point.

More than once they were fired upon, and without stopping sent back shot for shot, generally with deadly effect.

All around were scenes of the wildest description. Women shrieking ran through the streets between the rows of adobe cabins. Here and there dogs and children became mixed up in the confusion.

It was a scene never to be forgotten by those who took part in it.

"Hyar!"

As Big-Foot Wallace spoke, he suddenly drew a tight rein on his horse, and his comrades also pulled up with an abruptness that brought their horses on their haunches.

They had halted before a house that was by far the best in the village.

It was composed of adobes, after the style of Mexican dwellings.

"I'll hold these hosses till one o' ther boyees comes along," said Wallace.

Buffalo Bill and young Radway, without a moment's delay, rushed up to the entrance of the house.

It was shut, and they threw their weight against it, and still it would not give.

Buffalo Bill saw a large stone, weighing fully fifty pounds, and this he raised above his head.

Then the stone launched forward, and the door no longer offered any resistance, since it was crashed to splinters.

They kicked the remnants aside, and pushed into the adobe building, to be greeted with a shot so close to their faces that the flash of fire actually singed Buffalo Bill's mustache.

The man who had made the unsuccessful attempt on their lives was given no chance to repeat it, for, turning

on him with the fury of a tiger, the buffalo slayer shot him down with a revolver.

Shrieks were heard above, indicating that women were in the house.

It was what they were here to accomplish, the rescue of captives held in the hands of Canada Bill and his human tigers.

They sprang for the stairs, while around them sounded the turmoil of fierce strife—shouts, shrieks, shots, the heavy sound of blows on doors, the crackling of flames, all these combined created a turmoil that it would be hard to equal.

Bruce was slightly in the lead, and his eagerness well-nigh cost him his life, for, as he sprang through the doorway above, he ran into a couple of men, one of whom he recognized as the notorious Canada Bill himself.

These rushed at him with fierce imprecations, but Bruce knew what backing he had. He instantly struck the first man a heavy blow in the face with his revolver, and leaving Canada Bill for his companion, sprang past, and entered the apartment beyond, where he found himself in the midst of a number of women and girls, who, kneeling in terror, wept and wrung their hands.

## CHAPTER VI.

DEDICATED TO THE SUN.

The sight was one well-calculated to arouse a man's feelings to the highest pitch. Terror could be seen written on the features of most of these poor captives. They had heard the fierce din of battle, and could only believe their doom was near.

Bruce Radway let his eye glance from face to face with burning eagerness.

Suddenly it ceased to pass on.

He was gazing at a countenance that filled him with admiration, but it was not the one he sought.

Almost reluctantly, then, he tore his eyes away, and let them fall on the next face.

Then he uttered a glad cry.

"Lizzie!"

The girl at whom he gazed shrieked.

"Bruce, my brother, saved!"

Then she fell in his arms.

The young man bent his energies toward restoring her to consciousness.

Meanwhile, outside, the din kept on, and even grew more terrible, if that were possible.

Bruce glanced around with a decided show of interest, for it was a peculiar scene.

Just as he had heard, the place was decorated with numerous rude representations of the sun, and in the night from these blazed the light that illuminated the room.

The five girls in the place were garbed in robes, upon which had been sewed or worked in yellow silk the same blazing sun.

With their long hair hanging down their backs, they presented a weird as well as lovely appearance.

The truth was not hard to strike, if one had an inkling of it, for Canada Bill, the half-breed, had spent some years in Mexico.



He believed he could trace his ancestry back to the times of Montezuma, and the sun worshipers.

That being the case, he had conceived a great project of founding the old system of worship again in the Northwest.

One of its chief factors was girl prisoners to be each, in turn, a fair priestess of the sun, and, after serving in that capacity for a certain length of time, to give her life to the sun god, and be in turn succeeded by the next in line.

Their robes marked their position.

The blazing orb upon Lizzie's dress told that at present she was the ill-fated victim, and the lovely girl, whose face had attracted the eyes of Bruce, was her successor.

Soon Lizzie regained her senses, and looked around with wild fear.

"You have not come alone, dear brother?"

"No, no, Buffalo Bill and his braves are at my back. You can hear them spreading terror and death through the village."

"You have come just in time."

"Why do you say that, sister?"

"To-morrow would have been too late."

"What—would they have dared—"

"You know that man's crazy plans?"

"Canada Bill's—yes."

"With the rising of the sun in the morning, the first sacrifice was about to be made on the altar. I am the one selected for a victim."

"Good Heavens!"

"And Nina, my friend, would then be the goddess of the sun," indicating the figure toward whom Bruce cast many glances.

"We are here in the nick of time, then."

"I cannot go alone, brother."

"Nor do I want you to. We have come to save every one who is a captive here. All that we desire is haste in getting ready."

Then the looks of fear and wonder changed to expressions of great joy.

They crowded around, and Bruce was overwhelmed with their thanks.

Fortunately, another appeared just then.

It was Buffalo Bill.

"Come, Radway, every minute is precious now. We must get mounts for all. Found your sister?"

"Yes."

"Looks like you'd found several," with a laugh, for in their gratitude some of the poor captives had sought to embrace their deliverer. All save the one he would have cared most to do so, and she hung back.

The buffalo hunter's words caused Bruce to remember the danger hovering over them.

They were all the captives in the house. There were men prisoners in the village, who would be sacrificed on the morrow, for it was meant to be a grand holiday—a period of rejoicing because Canada Bill had succeeded in establishing the mysterious religion of his forefathers once more in the Northwest.

As they passed out of the sun chamber, Bruce looked around upon the floor.

A man lay where he had fallen, but he was the one whom the young fellow had knocked out.

Where was Canada Bill?

The buffalo hunter noticed his inquiring gaze and shook his head.

"Got away, Bruce."

How it happened was not made known, nor did Bruce inquire.

Through some trick or other he managed to give the ranger the slip.

Well, his day of reckoning would yet come.

Once outside, the girls were placed under the care of a ranger, while the others joined in the wild excitement.

Few men could be seen, and they were the daring invaders, dashing hither and thither, applying the torch, ferreting out enemies, gathering horses, rescuing captives, and carrying on a systematic warfare upon the enemy.

Already several male prisoners had been released and armed.

Among them were a couple of old hunters, who had disappeared in a mysterious manner long months before.

They were no sooner armed than they joined in the crusade with all the eagerness of men who had suffered much.

By degrees, order was coming.

The rangers secured many fine horses, and brought them to the center of the town, where the captives also waited.

Here they gave mounts to every one who was about to accompany them.

Big-Foot Wallace had given the signal that meant a rally, and as his men appeared, each leading a horse or carrying some spoils, he was assigned his position.

It was not the intention of the chief to leave any man behind when he quitted the place.

The fires still burned. Women shrieked from the houses that had not been fired, but they were the wives of the outlaws, and not those in need of succor.

Indian squaws were seen, too, yet how differently they acted, for, trained to repress their feelings, these poor creatures had witnessed the total destruction of their wigwams in a stolid manner.

The village was virtually in ruins.

Canada Bill's new venture had already received a killing blow.

Should he go under, the power that had held these strange elements together would be lost, and they would fall apart, just as will the staves of a tub when the hoops are gone.

"All here but Dandy Magee," said a voice.

Who had seen the missing ranger?

He was in the thick of the business, and as far as could be learned had been last seen entering a house where an outlaw had taken refuge, firing upon the invaders through a small window above.

No doubt Dandy Magee had met his fate in that adobe building, but those who knew him were quite positive that he had taken his man with him on the long journey.

It was not like the desperate Indian fighter to die without killing his slayer.

They could wait no longer for him, at any rate. Time was exceedingly precious. If Magee was alive, he would have to take his chances.

He knew what the captain's orders had been, and it was at his own risk he disobeyed.



The order came to mount.

There were sixteen of the rangers, and four rescued captives mounted and armed, so that their force was stronger than ever.

They had five women to protect, and that was a drawback, should they meet with enemies, and the chances were ten to one they must.

One last glance they gave around the still burning village.

"Fall in!"

The women were put in the middle, and then away they all went.

Before them arose the hill. Once on the crest they would have a downward course.

The wailing and weeping died out. Looking back, they could just see the burning lodges, most of which were already in ruins.

It was a determined body of men that rode up the hill. They had accomplished the work for which they had engaged, but this was not the end.

Around them lay the country of death. Honest white men shunned it as if a plague rested upon the land.

So in truth there did. It was the home of the border outlaws, men who would hesitate at nothing in the way of crime.

For an honest man to enter this region was inviting a terrible death.

When the fact of the desolation of the mountain village was made known to the allies, their fighting abilities would be considerably strengthened by the desperation and fury that must succeed the receipt of the news.

The crest arose just in front of them, and, with one grand spurt, they reached the crown of the divide and a halt was called.

Big-Foot Wallace desired to take an observation and see what could be discovered.

He looked upon the dark expanse spread out below, and which indicated the prairie.

Shots had been heard in the direction of the ruined village.

They believed the missing man, Magee, must have something to do with this.

Listening intently, they could hear the pounding of a horse's hoofs. They drew nearer with each beat. Someone was coming up the slope at a fast gait.

A single horseman rushed on, and at length broke into their ranks.

It was Magee.

He had shot his antagonist in the house, but was rendered unconscious by a bullet that took him in the head.

Recovering his senses and realizing that he had been deserted by his comrades, he had rushed out.

An outlaw sat on his horse adjusting the stirrups.

Magee tore him off, and gave him the benefit of his hunting knife.

Then, springing into the saddle, he had sped away. Others had fired at him. He was wounded in several places, but not seriously.

The pursuit was short-lived, as a great fear lay upon the survivors of the village.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE BLIND CANON.

Nothing now prevented their downward plunge into the cañon.

Just as they were about to make it, a peculiar hissing sound in the air was heard.

"Look at the fire serpent!" called a ranger.

A rocket had been sent up from the devastated village. It cleft the air, mounting to a great height, far above the divide.

Then came a faint boom.

The rocket had burst.

A dozen serpents of the air writhed and twisted as they descended.

It was a signal.

Those below must surely see it, for the noise of the *mêlée* at the village must have reached their ears and put them on guard.

Canada Bill had some deep significance in thus signaling his friends.

Would the allies be in ambush below, and wait to overwhelm them?

That might be its meaning.

Once out of the defile, they feared naught, but every minute spent between its walls was fraught with exceeding danger.

A perilous descent lay before them.

With the blackness around them they dared not advance faster than a walk.

More than one of them would have gone down had not a tight rein prevented.

No more sky signals were seen.

Perhaps that one had been enough, for it must have been in plain view all the way down the face of the rugged hill.

When they had gone about a third of the distance the rangers began to congratulate themselves that all was well.

Every precaution was taken against a surprise, a number of the oldest men riding in the lead, with rifles ready for instant work.

Their eyes had, in a measure, become accustomed to the gloom, and they could even distinguish objects ahead.

Thus, it was possible they might discover the trap, if such there chanced to be, in time to avoid its force.

Without the slightest warning the earth trembled beneath them. A horrible roaring, rumbling rush was heard. A blinding glare down the hillside, and then heavy continuous thuds like enormous hailstones falling.

The horses stood still, snorting and trembling with abject fear.

Their riders had experienced a shock and were not without some feeling of alarm.

"An earthquake!" cried one.

Buffalo Bill knew better.

"They've blown up the trail," he said, aloud.

"That's so, an' it war rocks rainin' down as we heard arter," declared Wallace.

This was as unexpected as it was fearful.

If the cañon was blocked below by the caving in of the walls they were trapped.

Big-Foot Wallace was not the man to be thrown off his base.



He immediately tossed his bridle to one of the rangers near by.

"Wait hyar. I'll go ahead. If I give ther cry o' ther loon, come down."

"Good!"

"I'm at your side, Wallace," said Buffalo Bill, also handing his steed over.

Together the two went down to discover what the worst might be.

A dense smoke met them half way.

"Powder," said Bill.

This persuaded them that their explanation of the disaster must be the truth.

An explosion had occurred, and could only mean one thing, and this was the explanation they had given.

They descended the cañon as rapidly as the circumstances would allow, and in five minutes came to loose rocks in the passage.

Beyond them they saw a great gap in the wall of the cañon.

It was beyond all doubt a fact that the outlaws must have had a magazine behind a certain place where the wall was shaky, to be made use of under just such circumstances as governed the present.

Just opposite the gap, this mass of *débris* was at least twenty feet high, and of such a character that it would be next to impossible for agile men to clamber over in the dark.

Further progress in this direction was, therefore, impossible, even if they had decided to abandon their horses.

Such a thing would be almost suicidal, and never entered into their calculations.

"Turn back!" grunted Wallace.

Some other plan must be set in motion in order to effect their escape.

No signs of the enemy had been seen, but this was no evidence that they were not near by, ready to follow up the blow delivered by the explosion.

The others received the intelligence in deep silence.

Every one knew that it meant a desperate time ahead, but not by word or action did they betray their feelings.

If any man had any fear in his make-up he would never have joined the expedition of Big-Foot Wallace into the land of death.

The horses were turned, and again they mounted the cañon.

Their leader had a task before him, for he must devise some way for taking the expedition out of the wilderness. But he turned to Buffalo Bill and said:

"You are leader here, Bill, for all will follow me and I will follow your lead. This is your band of bravos."

"I am with you for life or for death, Big-Foot; but the game is yours to play to the finish, and you will win, for well I know you," said Cody.

A better man could not have been found for the place than Wallace.

He was not only a daring fighter, but at the same time shrewd in his ways, ready to meet the cunning of the red man with an equal amount of scheming.

During this brief time he recalled all that had been told him concerning this region.

The man from whom he derived his information had

been a member of Canada Bill's gang, but since then reformed.

Every foot of the surrounding country was known to him, and all this did Buffalo Bill know.

"I must look at my map," said Wallace, as they neared the top.

There was no breeze under the high wall of the cañon, so that when Buffalo Bill lighted a match it blazed like a taper.

Big-Foot Wallace held the rude map, and the two rangers examined it closely.

When the match died down Bill had another ready, and this was kept up until they had scanned the map thoroughly.

"Hyar's the cañon, Bill," laying his forefinger on a line.

"Yes, and this is where we are. Now, if we descend part way into the valley again, we have a chance of striking another passage. See—it is marked here."

"Thet's our plan, Bill—our only hope."

"Mark it well. You see there are others of the same sort opening around. Some run together, others are blind cañons. If we got in one of 'em we'd be in a trap sure."

Wallace recognized that fact, and they had no choice.

Shut off from escape below by means of the regular trail, they must find a way of reaching the plains, if they hoped to get away.

Looking down at the village, they found that it was till a scene of excitement.

No doubt the explosion had been keenly felt in the valley, as they were about on the same level or strata of rock.

It had also told Canada Bill that his enemies were shut off from escape.

Hastily he had gathered what force could be mustered at the village and prepared to ambuscade the rangers, if they once more rode in among the ruined houses.

Watching the elevation, they could see when the figures of the horsemen were outlined against the heavens.

Then they expected war again, and held themselves in readiness to pour in hot shot from the bushes near by.

Minutes passed, but the rangers did not appear.

Canada Bill set out to investigate, and learned that their enemies had gone on by another trail.

Seeking the crest of the divide, he made signals with fire balls, which his men would understand.

Those above the mass of rocks would hasten to join their chief, while the men below with the horses would at once start off to intercept the fugitives in their new course.

It was not long before they began to arrive at the small fire he had kindled.

Eager questions were thrust at him, and the answers received made them growl savagely and grit their teeth.

It would go hard with them should any of the daring rangers fall into the power of these merciless foes. Ordinary measures of revenge would not satisfy their thirst for blood, and the victims would, perhaps, be torn limb from limb.

In this case the rangers were dare-devil fighters, and not to be easily taken. Indeed, knowing what their fate would be, they were very apt to fight to the death.

When the half-breed had gathered nearly a score of



men about him he called up those from the village, making quite a force.

Then, with burning brands taken from the fire, they began to follow the trail.

With more than a score of horses trampling over the side of the hill, a broad track was left behind which a man could follow readily.

There is nothing like impatience and a desire for revenge to rush things.

Those left in the village had quieted down, now that the worst was over.

They could be seen gathering around the remnants of the fires, as though seeking courage in numbers, no doubt talking it over.

The men trailed along on foot, and at their head were those bearing the torches, and following the tracks of the fugitives.

It was a wonder how the rangers had ever managed to make their way along in the darkness, and in ignorance of the route. Surely some power, higher than chance, must have watched over them.

Would this same Providence continue to exercise the care in the future?

The pursuers passed several openings in the hill, but the trail went on and they did not halt.

Eagerly Canada Bill hurried on.

He found the tracks turn into a cañon at last, and, with a laugh, turned to his men.

"Quick, boys, block up the entrance! The fools have made a mistake and gone into a blind cañon. When they come back we'll mow 'em down like ripe corn."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CORNERED.

It was the easiest thing in the world to make a mistake in connection with the various cañons, especially while the darkness was so dense.

Big-Foot Wallace did what he thought was for the best. He believed he was correct when he led the border rangers into the yawning mouth of a defile.

Later on he realized what trouble meant.

Unfortunately, he had stumbled upon the fourth cañon instead of the third, having skipped one by accident.

They plunged into the opening with confidence, believing they were on the road to liberty, but before they had gone a great distance Buffalo Bill noticed several things that made him fear something was wrong.

He spoke of his thoughts to Wallace, and the big ranger shook his head as though he, too, had become dubious with regard to the success of their move.

By this time the night was growing apace, and it was the hour of moonrise.

"Halt!"

It was just as well Wallace gave this order, for further progress was cut off by a wall of rough rocks that rose before them.

The barrier was enough to prevent any further movement with the horses.

Chagrined, the party sat on horseback, and looked at each other in the darkness.

What was to be done?

They could hear sounds back in the distance that warned them retreat was useless, as their enemies had already set about blocking the passage against the horses.

A hasty examination of the walls, at this place, proved that they could be scaled, and he ordered half a dozen men to mount on either side.

Signals were arranged whereby he could direct their movements.

It was an open question whether they should move down the cañon, with these men flanking their sides, or attempt some other move.

The men mounted and soon reached the top.

From here they called down regarding the lay of the land.

The moon had come up, and they could see quite a distance around, and no enemies appeared in view.

Big-Foot Wallace had consulted with Buffalo Bill, and decided on his plan of action.

One solution that presented itself was for them to scale the heights, assist those who could not climb alone, and make off in this way.

Without their horses, liberty would not be worth much.

The signal was given, and the whole force began to move down the cañon, keeping a sharp lookout for their foes.

Already the outlaws had blocked the passage against them, and were lying in wait, ready to mow them down with a leaden shower.

The rangers drew back.

Perhaps those who had been left to their own resources upon the hills might be able to do something to relieve the strain.

They were now overhead.

Receiving the signal, they kept on advancing, and finally reached a point over the rocks where the outlaws were crouching.

They could not see the men, but were made aware of their presence by certain sounds.

Every ranger began casting rocks of all sizes into the cañon. They fell in just a shower, and almost immediately loud cries arose—a panic seemed to ensue below.

It seemed likely that the enemy had been put to flight, but in reality they simply hid more securely.

As the walls of the cañon were wider apart below than above, this could be readily done by the men pushing up against the wall.

When Wallace started to move upon the works of the enemy, he received a fierce fire that played havoc in his ranks.

One of the rangers and an escaped prisoner fell to the rocks, and the rest, realizing that it was madness to advance in the face of such a withering fire, fell back.

The utmost confusion existed among them, and it was plain that some other means must be employed to gain their end.

They might leave their horses above, and creep down to the barrier, when they could engage in a hand-to-hand conflict with their enemies.

They knew not how many foes there were. Perhaps the whole gang under the Cheyenne chief might be



If so, such a move would be suicidal, for they must meet with death.

Wallace himself scaled the heights in order to scan the surroundings, and see if something could not be done.

He had a lingering hope that they might be near the real cañon, which he had been trying to reach, although, with the horses to look after, it was hard to tell what good this would do them.

One thing he learned that gave him uneasiness. This was the fact that enemies were advancing from over the crags. The balance of Prairie Dog's gang had come to the assistance of their comrades, advancing in swarms, having discarded their horses somewhere.

Although Big-Foot Wallace was without fear, he had never been a fool.

He had come here with a set object, that was, in a measure, accomplished.

Now that the captives had been rescued from the mountain village of Canada Bill, he did not desire to see them fall again into the hands of the enemy, or meet death.

For himself, with the true philosophy of a border brave, a man who had looked the grim monster in the face so often that familiarity had bred contempt, he did not care.

Cornered in the cañon, a desperate resistance was all that could save them.

The force of the enemy was limited.

If a heavy loss could be inflicted upon Prairie Dog and his white allies, they could not readily gain reinforcements.

With the aid of the howitzer and the score of deadly rifles he believed they could hold their own until morning came.

Escorted by the sharpshooters on the heights, the party could make its way back to the valley, find the right trail, and by degrees force their way to the prairie.

Wallace hastily lowered himself into the depths once more.

He divided his force, keeping one-third below and sending the balance above.

They were apt to see the hottest work up on the heights.

Besides, he had the howitzer in the cañon, and that was equal to many men.

Slowly the retreat was begun.

He meant to take up a position against the wall at the end of the place.

There was a narrow bend just before reaching the end, and they would guard this. No foe should pass it while Wallace had a man left in his band.

Meanwhile, Buffalo Bill took charge of affairs up on the heights.

There was need of a leader there.

He had six men on his side, and there were as many across the cañon.

The moon shone beautiful and clear, and would enable them to pick their men, and do terrible execution.

A code of simple signals was soon arranged, whereby he could conduct the actions of both parties under his command.

They knew their comrades below were getting ready to move backward.

When they had given the enemy a decided check, they would be able to follow along the upper line.

The Indians and outlaws were advancing as rapidly as the nature of the ground allowed, for they did not seem to know that their foes were lying in wait.

Each ranger had picked out a good hiding place among the rocks to serve as a fort.

By the aid of the bright moonlight they could see the forms of their enemies.

The Indians were most agile, leaping from rock to rock with the agility of mountain goats.

Perhaps the men of Canada Bill's band were quite willing they should take the move, if there was danger ahead.

Closer they came and not a shot, for Buffalo Bill had given orders not to fire until he led off, and his men would have allowed the foe to walk up and over them before they deviated from this course.

The buffalo hunter was on the same side as the enemy. He had selected this on purpose.

Waiting until quite a number of the Indians were in sight at once, he let fly.

As the report of his rifle awoke the echoes of the surrounding crags, it seemed as though a thunderbolt had suddenly broken loose.

The roar of a dozen guns, hoarse cheers, shrill yells, shrieks, and cries of all kinds united to make a fearful combination.

Above it all could be heard the clear voice of the great soldier scout.

"Give it to 'em, boys! Pick your men! Let every shot count! We've got 'em on the run!"

The allies were demoralized by such a hot reception. They made no attempt to run because it was dangerous.

At the same time they could not fire or take any part in the engagement, for their enemies were unseen.

All that remained for them was to drop down wherever they happened to be, and crawl away.

An Indian does not consider it so, his methods of warfare being entirely different from those of the rangers.

The affair was soon over, for it had been woefully one-sided.

A number of the Indians lay upon the rocks, but one could not say whether they were dead or not, as some were undoubtedly playing 'possum.

Having temporarily put a check upon the advance of the redskins. Buffalo Bill now set about following the retreat of his comrades below.

His design was to keep directly above them, so that he could guard the place and prevent the enemy from throwing rocks down upon the horses, causing great damage, and, perhaps, a stampede among the animals.

When Big-Foot Wallace reached the end of the cañon his comrades were already clustered upon the walls above.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE HOWITZER OPENS.

They were now in the position they hoped to maintain until dawn arrived, when they could set about making an effort to leave the blind cañon.

Signal fires were burning from the topmost crags of the rocky hills.



They meant to call every wandering member of the allied gang to the spot.

Buffalo Bill eyed the fires with suspicion, but nothing could be done.

Under such circumstances one's course is very plain. It only remains to wait and watch.

The enemy's signals could be plainly heard.

They were getting in readiness for some sort of a rush. This fact Buffalo Bill communicated to his comrades below. They answered that all was in readiness for action.

In a few more hours, morning would be at hand, when their tactics could be altered to suit the circumstances.

The allies were moving on, and about to open the ball very speedily.

Buffalo Bill guessed their plans. They had learned that the majority of the rangers were quartered upon the rocks.

A feint would be made upon them, while the main body would attempt to rush upon the camp in the gulch, hoping to sweep all before them by mere force of numbers.

Big-Foot Wallace had planted the gun where he could sweep the narrow throat of the cañon, and had men ready to serve it with powder and shot as fast as it was needed.

He had the horses well out of range so that stray bullets would not be apt to strike them.

Ominous was the silence, and full of significance.

Generally, before the coming of a gale, such a hush falls upon all nature.

It makes what follows seem all the more terrible in contrast.

Every man remained on the alert, ready to meet the enemy as they came up.

Soon the roar of battle would be heard where now silence reigned, and men would meet in a life-and-death struggle.

As was expected, the attack began on the heights. It being the policy of the allies to keep the rangers there employed while the real business took place below.

Shots were fired from various points, and had the appearance of a genuine attack, while, by moving their positions, the enemy made it appear as though they were in far greater numbers than was really the case.

They deceived no one, as the old campaigners were used to all the tricks that were known to the mind of the average redman.

Had it been possible at this late hour, such was Buffalo Bill's contempt for the attack, he would have allowed a third of his men to slip down into the cañon to assist his friends.

As the allies were below, this might prove rather dangerous business, for they would be outlined against the sky, and receive a volley.

The assault began along the whole line, and seemed particularly fierce above, but as not a man showed himself the fact became very evident that this was a mere bluff.

Although the cañon was not light, the intense darkness had been dispersed by the coming of the moon, and, as their eyes had grown accustomed to this semi-gloom, they were able to discern the crawling figures that began to make their appearance in the passage.

Wallace waited, and when the time for action came, he himself let go the howitzer. It had been arranged with a lanyard and a hammer, so that to fire it was simple.

The little cannon was carried on the back of a horse, but when wanted for use had to be fastened in position, although sometimes they are fired from the backs of mules.

When it was fired the report was terrific.

It seemed as though the walls of the cañon must come down, such was the fearful concussion in confined space.

There were no Indians left in the narrow passage afterward.

They had been swept out as though by a tornado. The force of the discharge, together with the missiles thus hurled through the ranks, had completely demoralized them.

A second assault was made, but in a different manner. Instead of advancing boldly, the allies crept along the sides of the walls.

Here, wherever seen, they were fired upon by the sharpshooters.

To add to the confusion, a shower of rocks, both large and small, came tumbling down from above.

It was too much and they fled, for the danger that surrounded them was of the most prominent kind.

The very air seemed to be alive with it, and they caught it in the strange signals that from time to time came floating to their ears from this or that quarter.

That the allies were awake and not disheartened by their numerous repulses, it was easy enough to see.

What they would do next was the question.

While he crouched there, an idea came to Buffalo Bill.

This was nothing more or less than to scout around the vicinity.

He arranged a signal with his men, whereby they would know when he returned, and not fire upon their best friend by mistake.

When this had been done, he stole away.

It had not left Bill's head that the cañon they had intended making use of must be near by, and, of course, his principal reason for this scout was to discover it.

The horses could not come out of the gully unless the allies were dispersed.

In reality Buffalo Bill took the scout just to give himself some action.

Leaving the hiding-place of his men behind, he crawled in the direction he believed the real cañon to be.

The allies, as he noticed by their signals, were pretty much down the other way.

In fact, he rather expected he would not run across any of them now.

Of course, the wish was father to the thought, for although Cody was a born Indian fighter, he never reveled in the horrors of war.

When such things came and were entirely unavoidable, he took them as a matter of course and did his duty like a true borderer; but he never sought to slay a human being, either white or red, for the mere fun of it.

Creeping along in the shadow of the rocks he found little difficulty in getting on.

All the while he kept a sharp lookout for signs of the expected cañon.

Nor did he neglect his course, for such a thing as getting lost was entirely within the realm of possibilities, and it would be no trifling affair.



To wander around that region at any time, uncertain where one's camp lay, could not be a pleasant situation, as the pitfalls were numerous and constant vigilance was the price of safety.

Cody had believed and hoped that he would not run across any of his enemies during his little scout, but this was a delusion.

He failed to discover the cañon just where he had supposed it lay, and was led to go a little farther, the temptation being strong.

An opening of some kind lay before him.

He crawled along to examine it, determined that whether it proved to be as he hoped or not, he would go no farther.

As he reached the edge he parted the scrubby bushes and looked down.

It proved to be only a shallow basin.

Buffalo Bill gave a growl of disgust and was in the act of drawing back from the edge when a heavy body was suddenly launched forward and fell partly upon him.

## CHAPTER X.

### A BATTLE OF THE EYES.

Buffalo Bill's first impression was that the weighty object that almost knocked the breath out of his body was an Indian.

The failure to entirely connect gave him a small chance.

He instantly rolled over and his hand, as quick as a flash, fastened onto the handle of his trusty hunting knife, which was drawn almost as soon as the thought came.

At the same time he started to raise himself upon his knees.

Then he discovered for the first time that he had been greatly mistaken.

It was not an Indian who had descended upon him in such a clumsy way, nor could the assault be laid to any of Canada Bill's crowd.

Buffalo Bill found himself glaring into a pair of yellow orbs.

He could hear a growling sound, a peculiar noise such as an angry cat makes.

There was no mistaking the figure he gazed upon in the moonlight—the long, tan form, and the tail that waved to and fro with such spasmodic movements.

A panther!

That was what it was.

The animal had made a poor leap, and upon recovering, found itself face to face with a human being, eye looking into eye.

A panther is cowardly in one way. It hates to meet a man face to face.

Sneaking through the forest, it will leap upon a hunter when his back is turned, just as it springs upon its prey, the deer.

Seldom has it been known to attack a human being face to face, unless rendered frantic by a wound, when it becomes a perfect forest devil.

The fear of a human being was in this case partly destroyed by the fact that Cody was on his hands and

knees. It is the redman that causes a wild beast to slink away.

Still, the ranger's eyes were fastened upon those of the beast in a fascinating manner.

Cody knew his danger, and that an encounter with this beast here, and now, was apt to prove a very serious affair.

He had not brought his gun along, but a revolver was in his belt.

The hunting knife in his right hand gave some hope of success in case of an attack, but like most men of his class, Cody generally preferred to back his faith upon the merits of firearms.

He continued to glare into those yellow eyes, while his left hand, inch by inch, traveled in the direction of his belt.

He had to grope for the weapon, but at last his hand eagerly clutched it.

The panther seemed growing uneasy, and its whines increased in volume.

Yes, sure enough, it was beginning to move backward a little. The constant stare of the human eye was proving too much for it.

Cody began to advance, and the animal growled but increased its retreat.

Suddenly it sprang to one side and was gone.

Discretion had proven more powerful than valor in its case. The human eye had conquered the brute.

Cody drew a long breath of relief.

He certainly would not have enjoyed a scrimmage with this wild animal under any circumstances, and just then it would have been extremely disagreeable, as no matter which way the affair turned he would be in a bad fix.

Some of his enemies would doubtless have been attracted to the spot by the noise, and even if Cody arose from his fierce battle victorious, he must have met death at the hands of these furious foes.

The strain upon his nervous system had been something tremendous, but men of his adventurous disposition are not apt to let such things bother them long.

Cody had made up his mind that it was foolish to look farther for the lost cañon.

He had better take the back trail and rejoin his brave comrades who were standing on guard among the rocks at the top of the walls surrounding the blind pass into which fate had lured them.

William Cody had the reputation of being a cheerful man, and gradually looked at things from the bright side.

True, even the most sanguine could not see just how they were going to escape.

Buffalo Bill cherished a belief that a way would be opened up to them sooner or later.

He turned and started on the back trail, having seen enough to discourage any idea of their finding and using the cañon.

He had come almost due west, governing his actions by the stars.

To return, therefore, he must head east.

Left to himself, he would have had no trouble in the least.

One thing he had not calculated on.



Since his passage, enemies had come between the blind cañon and himself.

The Indians, restless as so many wild beasts in confinement, were crawling northward in the hope of discovering something that might be used to their advantage.

Perhaps they even hoped to take the defenders of the rocks by surprise.

Having already suffered so severely from the deadly weapons of Buffalo Bill's braves, it was natural that they should yearn for the hour when they could demolish the whole band.

Revenge has a prominent place in the heart of the native American Indian.

When Cody discovered that there were redskins between the camp and himself, he knew he might do one of several things.

In the first place he could make a detour, though it seemed he was just as apt to meet his enemies in that way as by continuing straight along.

Then again there was nothing to hinder him from remaining in hiding, until he had some pretty conclusive evidence that the way in front had become clear.

He selected the shady side of a large rock, and sitting down allowed time to pass by.

Now and then he heard signals, but paid little heed to them. Once a couple of redskins passed by within ten feet of his hiding-place, but as he remained perfectly quiet, and the shadow of the large rocks entirely shielded him, they did not discover his presence there, but passed on.

Being too far away from the blind cañon to fear the whites on guard there, they did not make any effort to conceal themselves, but walked boldly forward in the moonlight.

Cody could have shot them down easily, and pointed his revolver at them, but without any idea of discharging it.

Soon he became aware of the fact that some crouching form was advancing toward him.

In the moonlight he could just discover a moving figure, and that was all.

Presently he realized that instead of his late antagonist in the battle with eyes—the panther—as he had at first suspected, this moving form was nothing more than a less than an Indian brave.

The moonbeams disclosed the feathers in his long hair. They glistened as they fell upon his greasy, paint-smeared back.

He would advance a few yards on his hands and knees, then stop and appear to be rooting. At least that was the idea Cody had.

Perhaps he had received a wound in one of the recent engagements, and was laboriously dragging a helpless limb after him.

Hark! was that a groan of anguish?

As he looked he saw the brave suddenly rise, and, standing at full height, look all around him.

This did not look as though the fellow was very badly wounded.

Could he have been crawling in this manner, because he believed himself still within range of those terrible rifles that guarded the blind cañon fort?

The brave must have a pretty exalted idea of the

eyes of the white rangers, if he thought they could pierce such a space of deceptive moonlight.

Again he dropped to his knees, and once more he advanced.

Straight toward the crouching white man he came. If his course was kept up, a collision seemed most imminent.

Cody drew his knife, for if there was to be an encounter that would prove to be the best weapon.

All he wanted was a chance to clutch the brown throat of the fellow with that left hand of his, and the trusty blade would do the rest.

Then, as he noticed the actions of the advancing Indian more closely, he became aware of the truth regarding the fellow's movements.

The warrior was following a trail.

Although rocks abounded in this region, there was also a good sprinkling of earth, and a keen-eyed Cheyenne brave, with eyes trained for such business, could follow a trail.

As this idea flashed into the mind of Buffalo Bill, he also conceived the very plausible thought that it was his own track the man followed.

By some accident, perhaps, the warrior had run across the trail. He may have started to follow it in mere curiosity, and then, finding that it was of recent make, his nature—that of a human sleuthhound, prompted him to keep it up to see where it would lead him.

Having settled this matter, the borderman began to get himself in readiness.

He selected the darkest part of the shadow, where even the keen eyes of an Indian would fail to discover his crouching form.

If he could end the business with one swoop of his knife, all would be well.

Should the alarm be given, he would have to rid himself of this foe, and then make a rush for the blind cañon fort.

On the way there was a chance that he might be fired on by enemies.

This was a possibility he did not like, and kept hoping it would not come to pass.

How he followed those tracks in such a poor light was a marvel to Cody, and he could not but admire the pertinacity of the fellow, even while he felt like cursing his stupid interference, and mentally doomed him to a sudden death.

At the rate he was advancing it would be only five minutes at the outside ere the fellow reached the range of rocks behind which knelt the mortal enemy of his race.

Cody might have beat a retreat, but was opposed to such a course from several reasons.

He did not believe it would be successful, as his movements were apt to attract the attention of such a sharp-eyed warrior, who would doubtless fire his gun and give the alarm.

Thus Cody had early decided that it would be better for him to remain just where he was and accept the chances.

One thing he felt sure of. This red would not live to tell the tale.



- It was his own situation that gave the prairie ranger the most serious thought.

Then, with a grunt of victory, he came on once more, confident that he was following some stray member of the white band.

Buffalo Bill, crouching there, felt a small piece of stone strike him on the shoulder, and startled, he looked up.

Nothing was to be seen save the outline of the rock some eight feet above his head, clearly cut in silhouette against the sky—nothing—then what was that almost in a line above him?

Buffalo Bill was compelled to twist his neck severely in order to look up.

He concluded he must be mistaken, and once more turned his attention toward the enemy.

During this time the Indian had continued to advance, and was now not more than twenty-five feet away from Cody.

The encounter could not long be delayed, and Buffalo Bill clenched his teeth in anticipation.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE WOOD DEVIL.

The unexpected frequently happens.

We lay our plans, and something, which was hidden from our sight at the time, comes up to seriously disarrange them.

So it was with Buffalo Bill.

He fully expected to have a desperate encounter with this keen-eyed Cheyenne brave, and had his muscular frame awaiting the proper moment for beginning hostilities.

He was suddenly made conscious of the fact that somebody had come between himself and the star-decked heavens.

Before he could glance up he heard a heavy thud and a gurgling cry.

It came from the direction of the trailer.

Looking, Buffalo Bill saw a sight that had thrilled him in every nerve of his body.

It was the panther again.

His first leap had been a failure, but this one was more of a success.

Buffalo Bill realized that in all probability he would not need his knife.

The Indian, though taken by surprise, fought for his life like a demon.

He managed to twist himself around so as to face his antagonist.

There was a whirl of dirt, a few terrific yells and the voice of the brave ceased; his last shout died away in a throttled gurgle as if the fierce animal had beaten down the puny guard offered by the Indian's arms, and had fastened his terrible teeth upon his throat.

At another time and place the prince of plainsmen would have been tempted to have fired at the panther as soon as the animal alighted, but, under the existing circumstances, he did not feel justified in risking his own life in order to attempt saving that of an enemy.

Besides, the panther got in his work with such wonderful rapidity that he had accomplished the warrior's de-

struction before Cody had time to give much thought to the matter.

One thing was sure. The outcries of the dying Cheyenne must reach the ears of his comrades, who would come hurrying to the spot from various quarters.

His position was too near the scene of battle to keep him from discovery.

This thought influenced him in making a sudden retreat.

Hardly a minute passed before the Indians appeared in view, coming from several directions at the same time.

Then guns began to sound, and there was quite a confusion for a short space of time, and it was evident that the bold panther had assaulted his foes.

The last shout that rang out was one of victory, however, and it was evident that the redskins had finally succeeded in demolishing their fierce antagonist, the wood devil.

Buffalo Bill was glad of this.

Had the wounded animal made an escape, he might yet run across it while endeavoring to reach his companions.

The one experience he had had with the panther quite satisfied him.

Cody struck off anew to make a roundabout trail in order to gain his end.

A few friendly clouds were working up in the heavens, which fact the borderman observed with considerable pleasure.

When the first of these passed over the face of the moon, he took advantage of the interval of half-darkness and advanced some distance in the direction desired.

Then he lay flat against a rock and waited until a second floating cloud had come across the moon's face, and Buffalo Bill made a run of it.

He was keeping one eye upon the heavens, to be sure that the moon did not steal a march upon him, when he suddenly ran slap into a man.

The other clasped his arms about him.

An exclamation he let fall convinced Cody that the other was a Cheyenne.

He made no attempt to struggle, but, on the contrary addressed a few words in the Cheyenne tongue, of which he was a master.

The Indian was fooled, believing he had seized upon one of Canada Bill's subjects by mistake, he gave a grunt of disgust and immediately released his hold.

There was heard upon the night air the sharp concussion of a blow.

Buffalo Bill had used his revolver as a cudgel, and served the purpose well enough, since the Indian went down without even a murmur.

Such promptness in acting in an emergency was what gained Cody the envious name he bore along the border.

He ran on, stopping again to hide when the moon threatened to appear.

The blind cañon was now close at hand.

Fearing lest he might be fired upon by his own men, Buffalo Bill gave the signal that had been agreed upon.

Then when a period of semi-darkness once more descended upon the rocky crown of the ledge, he again advanced.

He had made no mistake, for his men were near by and on the alert.

They listened eagerly to the brief account of his ad-



ventures, which explained the strange sounds they had heard.

It was decided that until the night had been passed nothing could be done.

Their allied foes continued to signal to one another from time to time.

While the siege was maintained during the remainder of the night, none of the allies were bold enough to advance upon the enemy.

About an hour before the coming of dawn, Buffalo Bill was surprised to hear a signal from below, calling them down.

Why should they abandon their position on the heights?

Before he would do this he must see Big-Foot Wallace, and have a personal understanding.

To pass down the face of the wall was a perilous undertaking while the moon shone.

Fortunately, the clouds passed now and then over the night luminary, and, by taking advantage of these opportunities, he might accomplish the end he sought.

Listening, he thought it strange that he no longer heard the whinny of horses, or their restless pawing upon the rocks below.

This puzzled the buffalo hunter, for what could have silenced them?

Had any dreadful calamity overtaken the men and horses left below?

This thought flashed upon his mind, because he had not forgotten what a terrible crime the infamous traitor, Tom Landers, had attempted.

When the next cloud concealed the face of the moon, Buffalo Bill slid over the verge of the declivity and began lowering himself.

He had a task before him, but one which he was quite able to perform, and, dropping from rock to rock, he reached the base of the deep gulch.

"All right, Billy," breathed a voice below.

It was Wallace.

The coast must be clear, then, or else this invitation to descend would remain unspoken.

He dropped.

The big-foot ranger was beside him.

"Air ther boyees comin', too, Billy?"

"When I give 'em the signal. Seemed so strange that thought I'd better come ahead and find out what you meant."

"Call 'em down."

"See here, where are the horses, Wallace?"

The ranger chuckled.

"Gone."

"I've already found that out, but where?"

"We've been nosin' around down hyar while you fellows lay asleep above, an' we diskivered a way outen ther blind cañon."

His words thrilled Buffalo Bill.

They seemed to promise such an easy solution to the puzzling question: "What shall we do?"

"A way out?"

"Thet's it."

"The cañon goes on, then?"

"No, it stops right hyar."

"Come, speak plainly, Wallace. This is a matter of life and death, old man."

"Reckon as how I knows it, Billy. Come wid me.

Secin' is believin', they say, an' ye kin jump at ther truth quicker when yer eyes take it in than wid all my pal-averin'."

Buffalo Bill went forward.

Sure enough, the horses were no longer to be seen in the cañon.

They had miraculously disappeared.

There was no optical delusion about that. When they reached the very end of the gulch, Big-Foot Wallace drew aside the mass of vines which in this gloomy spot had taken root and almost covered the wall.

"Look!"

Buffalo Bill could see an opening yawning in front of him, large enough to readily admit the passage of a horse.

"A cave!" he ejaculated.

"Not only thet, but one thet runs under these yer hills, p'raps fur miles. We went a long way in and never found ther opening that I am dead sure lies sumwhar beyond."

"Why so positive?"

Buffalo Bill was afraid lest they get into some trap. Their position was already serious enough, without it growing worse.

"If ye had used yer judgment, Billy, ye wouldn't asked thet. Ye see the cañon slopes this way. Hence during heavy rains considerable water must flow. Thet's what first roused my suspicions. I couldn't see why thar wasn't water whar we had taken our stand."

"It made me investigate, wid ther result ye hev seen. Now, if water goes inter this hyar cave, it stands ter reason it comes out somewhere below. All we has ter do is ter foller ther drift."

Buffalo Bill admitted it.

"I'll call the boys down. We might as well take our chances," he said.

Undoubtedly the allies knew nothing about this hole back of the vines.

Their investigations in the neighborhood had never disclosed it.

Of course, when morning came, and they discovered the absence of their enemies, an earnest hunt would speedily disclose the cave.

Buffalo Bill whistled.

The men above heard the signal, and as he had already given them full directions, they began descending a few at a time.

Whenever the moon went behind a cloud, progress was made.

Thus by degrees they dropped down into the cañon and reported.

Finally all were on hand, and ere long all had entered the cave.

Then the cañon was deserted, save by the skulking Indians and the outlaws below, who were afraid to creep into that narrow passage which had already proven so fatal.

When the rangers passed into the cave, they found that those already there had not been idle during this time.

They had blocked up the entrance, leaving a small hole for their comrades to enter.

Afterward this was filled in with rocks, so wedged



that it would be next to impossible to move them from the outside.

Thus they believed pursuit was effectually shut off from the rear for a while at least.

Whatever lay beyond they were willing to take the risk.

This sort of work makes men desperate. They know retreat is cut off, and that their only course lies in victory or death.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE UNDERGROUND RIVER.

Around them was darkness.

It was not their intention to proceed in the gloom, however.

From a dead tree—a pine—that at some time had fallen into the gulch, they had secured many armfuls of torches.

These were fastened to the backs of the horses, to be used as needed.

A strange spectacle the band made when once in marching order.

Some of the men rode and led horses, others went as torch bearers, and a few brought up the rear with the howitzer, ready for any desperate assault.

Of course, Big-Foot Wallace and Buffalo Bill went in the van, holding torches.

Their surroundings were weird. The cavern at times was simply enormous, and again it would dwindle down to a passage where those mounted could just get through two abreast and no more.

All the while they noted one thing; they were descending, but there was no abrupt fall.

If this kept up, it must take them to the prairie below, sooner or later.

By and by they noticed a small stream, but where it came from was unknown, but its course was the same as their own.

It grew rapidly, too, receiving accessions from certain quarters.

They could follow it, and thus discover the outlet of this strange place.

Now and then bats whirled past, and it was evident that they had congregated here in vast numbers from time to time.

While the company rested in one of those immense chambers, Bruce Radway and Buffalo Bill mounted a flight of natural steps, and, reaching a pinnacle, looked down upon the scene.

The smoking torches, the many horses and the shining stalactites drooping from the arched roof, and being rock crystal, glittered in the light as though studded with diamonds. All these things made a scene that was enchanting.

They were loth in one way to go on.

By this time the passage had begun to grow even larger than before.

A peculiar, subdued roaring sound reached them.

It made Buffalo Bill uneasy.

"I don't like that," he said to his companion.

Wallace listened.

"Sounds kinder like a river."

"To me it is more like a cataract."

"A waterfall—well what—ginger! s'pose this yer stream takes a drop, say o' fifty feet."

"That's what worries me. If it does, we're in a bad fix, I tell you, old man."

It was with considerable apprehension that they continued to advance.

The sound grew louder, and their worry increased but they hastened their progress.

When one dreads a possible event, strange as it may seem, it is still a fact that every nerve is strained toward bringing it about.

The roaring sound was caused by a waterfall, just as they had suspected, but it was one on the right, where a new stream came into the one they followed.

This brought great relief, for the way still remained clear.

Buffalo Bill turned to young Radway.

"What time have you, Bruce?"

"Just six."

"A long time after daylight, then."

"Yes."

"And before now they must know that we've given 'em the slip."

"I wonder——"

Bruce Radway did not finish his sentence.

The earth around them, even the solid rocks, seemed to heave and tremble as though some internal concussion had occurred.

A number of long stalactites fell crashing from the roof above.

Some of the men uttered exclamations that told of alarm, the women screamed and the horses gave evidence of fright.

"What is it?" asked Bruce, turning to his companion who had remained seated on his horse all of this time giving no indication of his feelings.

"Just what I have been expecting."

"What is that?"

"They have blown up our barrier."

"The deuce you say."

"And the way is now open for a pursuit. I feared it but we must be prepared."

The news was passed around, and created a sensation, while at the same time it relieved their fears in certain measure.

Men dread a danger which they can see less than one that is unknown, the extent and power of which are left almost entirely to the imagination.

All they could do, of course, was to push forward and leave the rest to Providence.

Word was passed along to those in the rear to keep a bright lookout.

One thing was certain. They had the advantage of their pursuers, and, if an opening appeared farther on, could slip out and be off hours in advance.

Should such an opening fail to occur, they had a gloomy prospect ahead.

This grim cavern would be a sepulcher. Here they would meet their fate.

The cavern grew no smaller, and this gave them reason to believe they would find an exit where the prairie could be reached.

Nothing was heard from their enemies, but they feared



re the latter had entered the underground retreat, and were in pursuit.

Sooner or later they would learn this.

While in this state of suspense their progress was suddenly arrested.

A yawning chasm appeared ahead.

The water dashed into it.

Appalled, they halted, while the leaders went forward to examine into the state of affairs.

It was not so bad as it might have been.

The chasm was only a dozen feet deep, and, perhaps, wide; but the horses could never jump in that uncertain light.

Beyond, the passage seemed to go on as before, and unless the water meandered into it again further on.

Buffalo Bill saw their one chance.

"We must fill up one side of it with rocks. See, there are plenty loose hereabouts."

Even a slender bridge in time of sore distress arouses long hope in the human breast.

A drowning man clutches at a straw, which, in his opinion, looks like a plank.

A rear guard was sent back with the howitzer to a point where they could watch the advance of the foe as they came along.

The remainder set to work, and rocks were rolled to the edge and tossed over.

Of course, this sort of work soon made an impression, but the pile mounted slowly.

What a great thing it would have been, could they have had a bridge to shove across, and take with them as they passed over the chasm.

Still, on second thought, Buffalo Bill did not believe the enemy would stay the progress of their advancing ones.

Being on foot, the outlaws and Indians could clamber down into the hole and up the other side, with ease of gymnasts.

Now the chasm was more than half filled.

Perhaps twenty minutes more would see the full work accomplished.

At this moment word was brought from the rear that the enemy was in sight.

Leaving the men to work, Buffalo Bill and the big ranger hurried back to the bend.

When they reached the spot they saw a singular spectacle before them.

The incline was rather steep just here, at least twenty degrees.

A number of torches were in view, held above the heads of Indian braves or some of Canada Bill's select men.

They formed a weird picture, advancing down the incline without the least sound, the torches flaming and disclosing to view other dim forms near by—their comrades.

Although the scene was dramatic in the extreme, it was doubtful whether any one observing gave it that significance.

They counted on the effect of their ambush. Would the allies be demoralized and flee, or could they show enough savage desperation to rush forward into the

darkness, the torch bearers shot down, and grapple with the unseen foe?

At any rate, the duty of the rear guard was plain. They were to hold the enemy in check, and they would do it if such a thing lay within the bounds of possibility.

Already the advancing foes had come quite close. A little farther and once more the dreadful storm must burst upon them.

Those left at work made as little noise as possible, in order that their presence around the twist in the underground retreat might not be too readily discovered.

But for the lights which they themselves carried, the Indians might have discovered the dim reflection of the illumination around the bend—as it was their eyes were blinded.

In a startling manner the situation would be thrown open to their inspection, and those in the lead would find themselves gazing into the depths of Hades.

The man who had sighted the howitzer was only waiting until the thick of the enemy came across the imaginary line he had drawn.

This time came.

Again that awful crash rang through the vaulted retreat. Again the stalactites trembled above and several fell. Again the allies found themselves hurled back in confusion by the little iron monster that breathed out fire and shot, maiming or killing all in its track.

Rifles began to sound at the same time, and those who carried torches and were unhurt, showed a feverish haste to hang them upon the rocks and bring darkness on the scene. A merciful darkness that enabled the unhurt to scamper off, and even some of the wounded to crawl behind outlying rocks, and thus escape the terrible hail of leaden balls that continued to sweep the passage for almost a full minute.

The work went on.

Rock after rock was tumbled into the hole and by degrees it filled up.

At length enough debris had been poured into the cavity to bring it on a level.

Now for the horses.

One by one they were led over.

Some acted as though afraid but the majority showed their indifference by their staid manner.

When all had been taken across, word was sent to the rear guard.

It came up.

The faithful little howitzer, that had on two separate occasions saved them, was once more strapped to the back of a horse.

Then the cavalcade moved forward in about the same order as before this adventure.

It looked as though nothing could stop such determined travelers. Every obstacle thus far presented had been overcome.

"I've an idea we're below the surface of the prairie," said Buffalo Bill, suddenly.

"Yas, an' wot d'ye make that out yonder?" remarked Wallace, pointing ahead.

The light of their torches seemed to glisten upon some moving object. They rode forward, and drew rein upon the border of a broad stream.



All looked their intense wonder.

"The underground river," said Cody, solemnly.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### LIGHT AT LAST.

There had been many stories told around the hunters' camp-fires concerning a mysterious stream that flowed beneath the surface of the ground.

Few claimed to have ever seen it.

There could be no doubt but that they were now looking upon this strange stream, whose source and destination were equal mysteries.

They could not go back. Was their advance also cut off?

One thing caught the eye of Buffalo Bill. The high shore did not seem steep, but inclined to be sandy and sloping.

Perhaps they might find a way of proceeding along in the shallow water until some outlet was discovered.

All entered the stream.

The water only came up six inches or so upon the horses' legs, and progress was made.

Of course, they turned down the river, as their chances seemed best in that quarter.

One of the rangers had gone on ahead.

They could see him coming along with the torch above his head.

All at once he uttered a loud cry.

Had some terrible monster of this strange underground river seized hold of his horse?

The animal was half under.

Ah, perhaps the water deepened!

The formation of the shore gave no indication of such a thing.

Buffalo Bill jumped at the truth.

"He is sinking—the treacherous quicksand—the sand of death. Quick! out of the way, or he is a doomed man."

Like an arrow from the bow shot the horse of the soldier scout forward.

At the same time exclamations sounded.

"Careful, Buffalo Bill!"

"There may be two go under!"

"Hold hard where you are!"

The buffalo hunter halted not.

He had apparently made up his mind as to what he wanted to accomplish.

See, as he gallops forward, splashing the shallow water right and left, he has torn from the saddle horn the lariat that hangs there, and which, in common with all other men of the prairie, he knows how to use so well.

This rope he whirls around his head.

Never before has he seen a quicksand engulf its victim with the rapidity that marks this now before them.

Already the horse is far under, and, although the man stands on the saddle, his turn will come next.

He fears to jump, no doubt believing that the insatiable monster will suck him in.

Standing there on the back of his almost-submerged horse, and still holding the blazing torch above his head, the ranger presented a peculiar and ridiculous appearance

at the time Buffalo Bill brought his own horse to a standstill and prepared to cast his lariat.

His aim was true.

The rope flew in rings through the air, and the noose settled over the blazing torch, the head and shoulders of the imperiled ranger.

Buffalo Bill tightened it with a jerk.

Then, turning his horse, he urged the animal toward the others of the party.

There was a frantic splash, and the luckless ranger was towed hastily along for, perhaps, ten yards or more.

Then, halting, he allowed the spluttering man to scramble to his feet, removing the noose of the lasso from his form.

By this time, short though the interval had been, seemed the suction of the quicksand that the unfortunate horse had completely vanished.

How were they to pass this point?

An investigation was made by a man who had a rope tied around his body, so that in case of trouble he could be yanked along out of harm's way before the sand took a good chance to get its clutches upon him.

A narrow passage was found where the horses, one at a time, could go along.

On the other hand were the treacherous sands, eager to engulf them.

They hoped the enemy would find them impassable and come to the sensible conclusion that the whole party was been sucked in.

This was too much to hope for. There were as many men among the allies as any they had ever seen, and they would read signs as well as the keenest borderer.

Once beyond the *terra el muerta*, or land of death, they continued along their route; but with such an ample before their eyes they were exceedingly careful about sending a man ahead to watch for this insidious danger, who was prepared to be saved by his friends should an emergency arise, as he had a rope secured about him, the other end of which was made fast to the pommel of a saddle.

They could not see that the nature of the underground river changed much.

Small streams ran into it.

Once or twice they were tempted to try and follow the creek, in the hope of finding an opening through which the water came, and which they could use in making their escape; but the way was so rough that although they saw no definite chance for success, and hence did not try, preferring to wait until the opportunity brightly

The water was slowly but surely growing deeper, and the current more swift.

This could mean but one thing. The river was about to reach a new formation, and rush through some high and rugged cañon, where the water would boil and make making passage with the horses an impossibility.

It grew worse as they went along.

Even the bold leaders experienced the deepest anxiety over the consequences.

The minutes were burdened with this suspense, and seemed as though they were hours.

Already their horses found insecure footing, and, kept on growing worse, at any moment one of those who might expect to feel his animal carried away by the rising flood, now flowing fiercely.



uch an accident meant death.  
here could be no telling what horrors lay before them  
at unknown land.

While their fears were at high-water mark, there came  
dden reaction.

"Halt!"  
With some difficulty the column obeyed the order of  
leader, given in a high key.

What was Big-Foot Wallace about to propose?  
No one could guess what terrible things lay before them  
ne dare try.

"Har's a chance ter the side hyar, boyees. It don't  
extra promisin', but we kin try. All in favor o' it  
syes."

A thundering answer came.  
A unanimous vote the rangers were in favor of try-  
ing anything that might give them the chance they craved.

The future, as marked in that black gulf beyond,  
d so black to them that they were only too glad of an  
tunity to escape the plunge into unknown dangers.  
That Wallace had discovered was not a very promis-  
held for investigation, but there was some hope back

each column had at least a chance to leave the stream.  
obviously they followed a trench where a small rivu-  
me bubbling and sparkling along from the upper  
ty ns.

They dismounted, and led their beasts, already wearied  
their exertions.

The hope was high within their breasts when they started,  
s the difficulties increased it began to dwindle down.

Return was almost impossible, and yet it began to  
s though it would soon be just the same to advance.  
op!"

On this order the command paused.  
Buffalo Bill, close to the van, took a torch from the  
of a man near him.

He flickered, and the flame kept moving toward him  
in unsteady motion.

"I thought so," said Cody, triumphantly.  
u see, there's a current of air passing through.  
s an opening of some sort beyond. We must push  
forward."

His words caused a cheer to arise, and new enthusiasm  
in them.

For all their trials, what if they were to meet with  
at last?  
ly waiting for the word to advance, the column  
forward.

They surmounted what difficulties lay in their way. It  
as though nothing could stop them now.

While they experienced a feverish anxiety re-  
nd g what lay ahead.

The breeze grew stronger; they were drawing near an  
g, and a little more of this work and success would  
st and them.

The passage grew smaller. There would be no room  
horses soon, if it continued to diminish in size.  
ld they abandon the steeds?

And, right come to that yet, as, by some means or other,  
ose ust get away from here.  
ay blo Bill called the attention of those around him  
ight ahead.  
passage came to an end.

There was the stream entering through a fissure in the  
rocks.

Buffalo Bill sprang from his steed, and, with a torch,  
hurried forward to examine the place.

He found it possible to crawl through himself.

Daylight entered the crack.

Once beyond, the soldier scout found himself in a  
small gully, the bed of the stream that entered the fis-  
sure and sought union with the broader underground  
river.

All that worried them now was how to get the horses  
out.

He examined the fissure, to see if it could be enlarged.

If they had had proper tools this might have been  
done in an hour.

As it was, the job might take the balance of the day,  
for all they had to work with was their hatchets.

Nevertheless, they saw a chance, and that gave them  
some enthusiasm.

A rear guard with the howitzer in charge was thrown  
out to protect them against surprise.

Then Buffalo Bill, with Wallace and several more,  
crawled through the fissure, to scout around and see  
what the lay of the land might be.

Men were at work knocking off pieces of the soft  
stone and carrying it back.

They realized that it was only a question of time as  
to when they must accomplish their end, and this spurred  
them on.

So far as they could tell, the morning was already far  
advanced.

At the rate they were making progress the night might  
roll around again before their end was accomplished.

They had plenty to eat. What did it matter?

Once in the open, they would make up for lost time,  
and give their enemies the slip.

So they labored on.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE FATE OF THE TRAITOR.

Those who had crawled out of the fissure found them-  
selves in a gully.

They sought the most convenient means of reaching  
the top, in order that they might have a look around the  
country, and see what the chances of escape were.

It was some time before they found what they were  
seeking, and then only after they separated, advancing in  
different ways.

Bruce Radway was one of their number.

He had a good deal to do with organizing the expe-  
dition, and was consulted at certain times by Big-Foot  
Wallace, although the latter had charge of the men  
directly.

When Bruce finally drew himself up to the top of the  
sloping wall, he found himself gazing upon a queer bit of  
country.

The rugged foothills were not far away, but all around  
him lay loose rocks, interspersed with thickets of small  
trees.

It was a wild scene, an uncanny bit of landscape, and  
seemed bristling with dangers.

Still he saw no life, save a skulking wolf.



The young ranger stood there for some time, endeavoring to mark out the course they would have to take when once they came out of the gully.

He knew the direction in which the hills lay.

The sun shining overhead gave him the points of the compass.

Satisfied at last, he turned to retrace his steps down the side of the gully.

A gun sounded, and a bullet zipped past his head.

Other shots sounded.

Perhaps they were not aimed at him, for he heard the sounds of a fierce conflict farther down the gully, and between him and the entrance to the fissure.

There were loud shouts, the rapid rattle of firearms and such accompaniments as would indicate a fierce battle.

Without hesitation Bruce started in that direction. His first thought was to have a hand in the fight and help his comrades.

In another minute, however, he found a force of Indians in front of him.

They were hiding behind trees and rocks, and seemed desperately engaged with enemies in front, who were retreating.

For him to attempt to rush through the ranks of his foes would be a foolhardy act, as the chances were ten to one he must fall under their fire.

He had sunk down among some bushes when he first discovered the enemy, and here he remained while they advanced.

He might manage to creep around to the other side and gain the vicinity of the fissure unmolested by the Indians.

One thing he had seen—there were white men with the redskins. This told that the outlaws were on the spot.

He had no time to speculate as to how they had reached this place. It was enough to know they were on hand.

When the last of them had vanished through the scrub beyond, Bruce, bending low, so as to show himself as little as possible, began to glide away with the intention of making the half-circuit he had settled upon.

They would have to rout these foes ere they could proceed with their work.

He could hear the occasional shots that told of the warfare being kept up, but these sounds he kept on his right.

Thus he was gradually nearing the wall of the gully, and, once that was gained, he would have no trouble.

Fate decreed that he should not reach it without another adventure.

His attention was arrested by a sound not twenty feet away to the right.

It was more like a stone clattering among the rocks than anything else.

Naturally he glanced in that direction.

As he did so, a human form sprang upon his stooping figure with the ferocity of a tiger.

Wholly unprepared for such a thing, the young ranger could not maintain his balance.

The Cheyenne brave landed on top.

An accomplished fighter, the latter instantly planted his knees upon the other's body in such a way that Radway's arms were pinned down.

The next thing he saw was the glitter of a steel blade in the sunlight.

It was intended to pierce his heart.

He did not close his eyes, but looked the murderer Cheyenne full in the face.

The blow did not fall.

Instead, the warrior uttered a cry, and, bending forward, looked at him closely.

Then he suddenly arose, and motioned Bruce to the same.

Astounded, the young man obeyed.

"Go."

The Indian waved his hand toward the side of the gully, indicating that Bruce could return to his friends.

Amazed, the latter stared at him.

He noticed that one of the brave's arms hung by his side as though helpless.

Then a flood of light dawned upon him.

This was the wounded warrior whom he had given drink of cold water to. That act of human kindness was bearing its reward. An Indian never forgets.

He held out his hand, but the brave shook his head.

"No friends. Next time see, shoot quick. Make a white boy for drink. That all."

When fortune gave him a chance to make a return blow, he was always ready to accept it, no matter how small the source.

So under the present circumstances he stood not by the order of his going, but went at once, dodging among the rocks at the first chance, as though fearing the Indian might change his mind and fire upon him.

He reached the vicinity of the fissure to find that the men were coming out as rapidly as they could.

The Indians were retreating.

The impetuosity of the rangers carried all before them, and they soon cleared the gully in the vicinity of the fissure of their foes.

Those at work kept on hammering away.

It meant everything to them to know that the work was growing gradually less.

Seeing the place almost deserted, the rangers went some little distance in pursuit of the enemy, and settled down to watch.

He had an idea some stray warrior might slip through the lines and attempt ugly work.

The firing kept up in certain quarters, but close by was quiet.

His attention was finally drawn to moving among the bushes.

Watching closely, he saw a white man and two others creeping forward. Their eyes were glued upon the ground from whence came the sounds of labor.

Bruce gave a start when he caught a square looking white man.

It was Tom Landers, the traitor, whom they had met in the cañon after Buffalo Bill had brought his vengeance.

After all, he had escaped death.

His terrible experience seemed to have completely making of a devil in him, if that was needed.

The man who could attempt to poison his fellow men need not much to make him complete in all that he made up a demon.

Bruce hardly dared to move. Crouching low



lually brought his rifle around, so that he could cover  
n.  
low the three crawlers had reached the fissure. He  
d see them bend their heads to listen, then creep a  
e closer to peer in.

he men at work had torches, in order to see what  
e were about.  
his threw their figures out into bold relief, and gave  
spies a plain view.  
ven as he looked, he saw Landers bringing his rifle up  
is shoulder.

there could be no mistaking his motive. It was as  
n as day that he meant to shoot one of the toilers un-  
the rocks at his post.

low was Bruce Radway's time.  
When the bead on the end of his rifle covered the  
n wretch, his finger touched the trigger.  
Bruce instantly dropped his discharged gun, and  
apped out a revolver.

landers had fallen flat on his face, just as though a  
of lightning had struck him.

he brace of Indians had whirled around, believing  
ss were in an ambuscade, as was in reality the case.

hey sped away like frightened deer, leaping right and  
ne to avoid swift-flying bullets.

leadway accommodated them with a few from his re-  
er, which at least had the effect of hastening their  
tat.

When Buffalo Bill returned from the front to see what  
his firing in the rear meant he was amazed to find a  
ot lying in a pool of blood at the entrance to the cave.

g turning the body over with his foot, his astonishment  
reased. "Tom Landers escaped the rope to meet his  
here. Who killed him?" he said, aloud.

You must lay it to me," and Bruce appeared from  
ng the bushes.

was afraid you had shared the fate of poor old Bob  
et," said Buffalo Bill.

Was he killed?"

Yes, during the skirmish a bullet took the poor old  
w in the heart. He died in my arms. His last ef-  
was to fire his rifle at a red, and I believe he hit him,

But we've avenged him fully."

too, had a narrow escape."

Bruce thereupon narrated his adventure with the one-  
ed Cheyenne.

dy nodded.

they're a peculiar people. Got some very good traits,  
a number of mighty bad ones. But I never knew a

to go back on his word, or forget an act of kindness."

What shall we do with this?" touching the body with  
oot.

Take hold! We'll toss it in among the rocks."

hardly had this been done than several men came in  
t, bearing the body of poor old Bob Bracket, the

boer.  
e had died just as he expected to, with his face toward  
ha lifelong foes.

they bore his body into the cave, and buried him there  
er the rocks. The gurgling stream would be his

ple  
tem for all time.

men work was resumed.

ew men took the places of those who had begun to  
signs of weariness. The opening was growing, and,

as before stated, it was plainly only a question of time as  
to when it would be of a size sufficient for their purpose.

Desperate men will do desperate work at times, and  
they had certainly reached a point where they had every-  
thing at stake.

Their foes were still determined, and the result of all  
was an open question.

## CHAPTER XV.

### BUFFALO BILL'S RIDE.

Thus the day wore on.

As the afternoon began to wane, more men were put  
to work. They knocked fragments of the rock away wher-  
ever they had a chance.

The opening increased in size, and began to look as  
though a horse might be led through it.

"Try and see," said Cody.

The sooner they were out of this place the better, for  
their men reported the enemy as gathering in numbers,  
and it became evident that those who had been signaled  
for during the night had come.

They tried the experiment.

Sure enough, the horse passed through, and upon  
reaching the open air showed signs of great satisfaction,  
giving a neigh and immediately starting to nibble grass.

One by one the animals were led out.

It began to look as though they were about to make  
their run at last.

Probably by this time the neighborhood was overrun  
with hostiles.

When the news went abroad that a band of bordermen,  
under the leadership of Buffalo Bill, was trapped in the  
Bad Lands, the utmost excitement would be stirred up  
among these Indians, who hated the whites cordially, and  
were always ready for an opportunity to do them mis-  
chief.

At last all the horses were out, but the rattle of guns  
could be heard, proving that the Indians were growing  
bolder.

The pickets were given a signal to fall back in slow  
order.

Each man came running up. There was mounting  
in hot haste, the trampling of horses, and they were  
at last off.

The first thing to be done was to clear the gully and  
reach the prairie beyond.

Among the loose rocks numerous enemies were con-  
cealed, and in passing they were subjected to the fire  
and two of the rangers fell.

Several horses were struck. Indeed, with a cunning  
that did them credit, the redskins sought to render  
their horses useless, well knowing that this would  
doubtless throw the whole party into their power.

When they finally reached the prairie, it was in some  
disorder.

Two men had been lost.

As many horses had gone down, but their riders  
had escaped on the steeds of those who had been shot  
from their saddles.

A number of the steeds had been wounded, for the  
bullets had flown in a lively manner during the short  
engagement.



These would soon break down, and then some of the others would have to bear double weight.

From different quarters a cloud of Indians seemed in full chase.

Where their horses came from was a mystery, but there they were mounted and eager for the blood of the daring men who had invaded their territory, and snatched captives from the village of their allies.

Canada Bill and many of his men rode with them, spurring on to win success.

With good horses now the fugitives would have risked their chances, and been pretty sure of ultimate escape; but a number of the animals they depended on were in a bad state, and liable to break down at any moment.

They realized that this flight would not save them. Even the coming of darkness was not hailed with satisfaction.

Already two of the wounded horses had given out, and their riders had to mount behind some of their companions.

Double weight would reduce speed, and it was only a question of time when they must be overtaken by their foes.

Buffalo Bill brought up the rear.

When he saw an Indian outstrip his fellows, and begin to draw up on them, the soldier sharpshooter would turn in his saddle.

Realizing his danger when he saw the leveled rifle, the Indian would flatten himself along the neck of his horse, but it availed nothing.

Each time Cody fired a horse pitched forward, tossing his rider twenty feet ahead.

The scout was aiming at the steed, and letting the rider look out for himself.

In the long run he might have lessened the number of their foes considerably.

The coming of darkness would prevent any such tactics on his part.

Cody knew this.

He realized perfectly well that something had to be done, and what their only chance would be—to find some place where they could keep their enemies at bay until morning came, or some help was obtained.

His eagle eye had discovered what he was seeking—a place where they could come at bay, and defy the foe.

In the midst of the plain stood a pile of rocks forming a natural fort.

Already a fierce fight had occurred here between rival factions, and bones lay around, white and shining, picked clean by wolves and vultures.

They made for it with all haste, and the Indians, divining their purpose, set up a great shout of fury.

Try as they might they could not reach the head of Buffalo Bill and his band.

The western sky showed masses of red and where the sun had gone down.

Night would soon sweep over the plain.

As soon as they reached the rocks the rangers dismounted themselves from their horses, and allowing a few minutes to lead the animals away, the balance facing the onrushing foe.

Their pursuers, in the flush of their eagerness, came rushing on.

They met with a warm reception, which cooled their ardor.

Even the howitzer was placed in position among the rocks, and sent its load into the midst of the struggling horsemen, some endeavoring to press forward, others were wild to escape.

The Indians scattering, withdrew from the fight.

They formed around the rocks, and soon camp-fires were blazing in a dozen different quarters.

The braves, too, lighted fires and made themselves comfortable for the night.

Their defenses were strengthened, so that in a night attack they could beat the foe off.

Buffalo Bill and Wallace knew their situation was perilous, since they were really five horses short of the number required to give every one a mount.

The rescued girls would have to be carried, and there is no horse so strong that he will not feel the weight of such a burden.

"I know that Captain Luther Cook and his company of the Seventh Cavalry was to be at the forks of Roaring Run on the seventh. What date is this?" asked Cody.

"To-morrow'll be the day ye speak of," replied Big-Foot Wallace, confidently.

"That seems like luck. If we could only get to the captain all would be well."

"I'll go."

"No, you don't Wallace. If any one goes, Buffalo Bill is the man. Mark that down."

They began figuring on their position, and discussing the forks of Roaring Run might be.

Between them they mentally made out the features of the surrounding country.

Wallace went to the nearest fire, and the two examined the rude map he had of the region.

It coincided with their ideas, and this gave them considerable satisfaction.



Buffalo Bill decided to go, but he must wait until his horse was rested. The sharp run from the gully had left the animal unfit for reliable work, especially since his fare had been of such a limited amount.

Just before moon-up would be a good time to start—when he could take his chances.

The rock fort was so garrisoned that it could resist assault from even a larger force than the enemies opposed to them.

While these brave men held weapons, they would stand up to the work, and beat back the allies.

Perhaps, feeling that an assault would be madness on their part, the Indians might agree to some other plan, and not risk further defeat.

Hunger—thirst—these were the forces that could be depended upon in times like this. They would weaken the garrison and make them become easy victims.

A guard was set over the camp, while the remainder sought sleep, of which they were much in need.

Buffalo Bill also lay down.

He needed rest, and Wallace had promised to wake him up at the proper time.

A hand on the shoulder of the soldier-scout aroused him, and he found the old ranger bending over him.

"The time has come, Bill," pointing to the east, where the moon was nearly ready to rise. A faint, silvery gleam of that time was precious just then.

Buffalo Bill arose, and stretched himself.

"I am ready," he said, simply.

His horse stood near by, and Big-Foot Wallace held his rifle.

"Good luck ter ye, Bill," was all the other said, but meant volumes, accompanied as it was by the firm pressure of his hand.

Cody rode slowly out of the rock fortress, after a few hurried farewells, and he headed his horse toward the east.

Buffalo Bill bent forward in his saddle, awaiting the moment which he knew was sure to come sooner or later.

There was a yell from one quarter, showing that the hoof-strokes of his horse had been heard. It was answered farther on.

Fires sprang up.

The allies anticipated this move, and were prepared to give the bold rider who would go for assistance.

It was no longer a time for concealment.

Buffalo Bill had slung his rifle to his back, and a revolver was grasped in either hand, the bridle held between his teeth.

He dug his heels into the sides of his horse, and the powerful chestnut responded with a fine burst of speed.

Like a tornado the soldier-scout descended upon the line of encircling foes.

## CHAPTER XVI

### CONCLUSION.

There was a shock as the scout came in contact with the line of reds. His revolvers opened up and beat a lively time. No man on the whole border could excel in the rapidity of pistol-firing this knight of the revolver.

The Indians shrank back appalled from such a death-dealing machine.

They looked upon him as a demon let loose from the other world.

With a crash and a blaze the ranger was upon them. His revolvers cut a swath in the double line, and another plunge of his horse carried him through.

Then away like the wind.

They must have fleet steeds who follow such a daring rider.

Of course there was pursuit, and as the moon arose, looking back, Cody could see the Indians coming along in a squad.

They hardly cherished hopes of overtaking him, and yet kept on because it was their business.

Perhaps they really did not care much about overhauling the man since seeing his work with the revolver.

Buffalo Bill had already made a reputation among the Indians, who feared his rifle, knowing the deadly accuracy of his aim.

When he saw the persistency with which they followed, Cody resolved to have some fun with his pursuers.

Concealed behind a *motte* of timber, he allowed them to come close up.

Then, firing on them, he had the gratification of seeing two riderless horses dash away.

The Indians were confused at first, but, recovering, once more started in pursuit.

He had his horse go lame and hobble along in the most agonizing way possible. The enemy with loud shouts broke into a wild gallop, and hastened to pursue their winged game, meaning to close in from all sides.

When Cody had them where he wanted, he put another bullet where it would do the most good.

Then, uttering a loud and defiant shout, he urged his horse on, amid a shower of bullets, and soon regained his former distance.



These diversions took the enthusiasm out of his pursuers.

They had no hope of capturing or slaying such a man. He seemed aided by a mysterious power which they could not understand.

Some of them called him the Evil One. All feared him.

Buffalo Bill was making headway all this time, for he had selected his course, and with each mile was shortening the distance between himself and the fork of the river.

If the soldiers were in camp there he could depend upon securing their aid.

Cody did not rush his horse, knowing the long ride that lay before him.

He occasionally turned upon the enemy, and played such serious tricks that the redskins grew very weary of the game.

By twos and threes they dropped out. When men want to give up a cause how easy it is to do so. This thing continued until those who kept up the chase were so small in point of numbers that they actually grew alarmed when they discovered the fact.

They were so much afraid that had the fugitive but turned to look at them they would have fled in alarm.

It was well on toward morning when Cody learned that he was no longer pursued.

He rode on at the same even pace, as though it really made no difference to him whether they kept it up or not.

At the same time a grim smile could be seen upon his face, as though it pleased him to discover that the reds entertained so much respect for his prowess.

Clouds had come up and hidden the moon from his observation.

It was fortunate that William Cody was an experienced borderman, for, with no stars above to guide a traveler, the chances seemed to be in favor of his wandering.

Generally a man in the darkness, or making his way through a wood, will bear to the left, and often make a complete circle.

Those acquainted with this fact guard against it successfully.

Cody had his way of doing so, and his line of travel was nearly straight.

Thus he came to a small stream of water. The trees were sighted first, and, knowing how much in need of refreshment both himself and his steed were, he headed for them.

The animal walked into the stream and began to quench his thirst.

Buffalo Bill bent down to fill his canteen with the swift-running fluid.

He had just succeeded in doing so when his ear caught a whirring sound.

He knew it came from a lasso that was passing rapidly through the air.

Instinctively Cody ducked his head forward.

The movement saved him.

He felt the loop strike his back. It even caught the pommel of the saddle as it was immediately released.

Cody's knife was in his hand with the quickness of thought.

The edge pressed upon the rope, which parted.

Although he knew that his enemy or enemies, in any case might be, was on the side of the little stream, he had been aiming for, Buffalo Bill was not going to be turned back by such a small circumstance.

He heard an Indian exclamation when the noose of the lasso was cut.

This gave him an idea that he was opposed by a wandering brave, doubtless belonging to the village of the Prairie Dog.

As the knife was thrust into its sheath, out came the revolver.

His heels dug themselves into the ribs of his faithful horse, and the animal leaped forward through the low water.

He suspected that the unsuccessful attempt to shoot him would be followed by one or more shots, and, as the range was exceedingly short, he desired to offer as good a mark as possible.

The stream was cleared in two bounds.

On the farther side was a shelving bank and some low bushes.

Upon this spot the party must have stood who had thrown the cast with the lasso.

Cody urged his horse up, and saw dark figures of men around him.

Guttural exclamations betrayed the fact that they were Indians.

The situation was, indeed, a desperate one, and Buffalo Bill was forced to admit it.

He had no thought of anything but the most desperate devil resistance.

Enough light there was, in spite of the clouds and the head covering the moon, to see the movements



mies. They were close at hand, whereas at twenty distance he could not have discerned them.

The first brave made a dash for the bridle of his horse, finding out something about the white man having no idea of a mount.

Bill Cody coolly knocked him over with a shot from his revolver.

When the battle was on.

The red devils were all around him, and it would keep him busy endeavoring to keep their hands away.

Guns were discharged, and the contents came dangerously near Cody's head.

At any second he might receive a bit of lead in the back that would end his trail.

As he tumbled over the reds he had the fierce satisfaction of knowing that the number of his antagonists was being gradually decreased by such action.

At this rate he would do them all up, if his revolvers held out.

Already he was wounded in several places, but Heaven was kind to Bill Cody. Perhaps because his mission of salvation to the little company left among the reds.

At any rate, no bullet or knife touched him in a vital spot, nor was his steed injured.

Indians have great respect for a horse, and dislike to injure a fine animal.

They did not seem to realize that the white ranger would fall into their hands if they slew his steed, until it was too late to do so.

The fierce nature of his rush carried him through the ranks.

Right and left the red rascals fell back before his flashing revolvers that dealt death with such terrible swiftness.

Of course, they did not know who it was against them from their united power was thrown, but the severe lesson taught was enough to demonstrate that they had been caught a terror.

When Cody found the open country before him, he dismounted bent low in the saddle, and let his horse out for all it was worth.

The intelligent animal seemed to understand, and galloped forward as though fresh.

Buffalo Bill, looking back, saw a flash of fire illuminating the darkness.

He heard the report of guns and the whistling of bullets over his head.

In such a poor light it would have been mere luck

had the prince of marksmen been able to wing him or his horse.

Cody believed he had nothing more to fear from these fellows.

Then dismounting, he felt all over his horse to see if the animal had been hurt.

He feared the worst, for it hardly seemed possible that the horse could have passed through such a tempest and remain unscathed.

To his delight, he could not find a trace of a wound of any sort.

This made him think of himself.

He found there were several. He had bled a little, but none of them were of a serious nature.

It was impossible for him to bother with them now, since time was precious.

He was just about to throw himself upon the back of his horse when he stopped to listen.

The night wind was in about a line with his course. He had guided himself by it ever since the moon was obscured.

It now brought sounds to his ears. The plain rush of horses' hoofs.

"Coming, sure enough," he muttered.

Then, as he swung himself again into the saddle, he glanced toward the east.

When would day come?

He was pleased to see a faint line of light along the horizon that told of coming day.

"Let them keep it up until it gets light enough for Buffalo Cody to look along the barrel of his gun, and I reckon he'll teach 'em a lesson they won't forget."

As he thus muttered, the prairie scout gave his horse the rein.

A chorus of fierce yells from the rear told that his pursuers heard him.

He sent back a shout of defiance.

Cody realized that he did not gain, but he had every reason to believe he was holding his own all the while.

Glancing back, he could just make out his pursuers. They were riding madly in something of a little clump, and Cody smiled grimly to think what his repeating-rifle would do when he once began to use it.

He wanted to make sure work of it when once he got his hand in.

The redskins had sighted him, too, and gave tongue, just like a pack of hounds at sight of the quarry just ahead.

Several fired their guns, but as both parties were on the jump the bullets went wild, as was to be expected.



Cody had endeavored during the chase to keep in as straight a line as he could.

It gave him satisfaction to see that he had not varied a great deal.

All the while they were rushing on he had been drawing nearer his destination.

The time came at last when he was resolved to brook this pursuit no longer.

Suddenly drawing in his horse, he turned the animal's head toward the on-rushing pursuers, who gave a howl at the action.

With the report of his rifle one brave dropped from his horse.

The others continued on, doubtless believing his gun must now be empty.

Again he fired, and as the third and fourth shots came a panic was noticed among the Indians.

Men threw themselves behind their horses, only to have the steeds bowled over by a shot and themselves left unmounted.

A hailstorm of bullets appeared to sweep over the level ground.

Buffalo Bill kept pumping away. The shots rang out bing, bang, bang, with the regularity of a machine.

These new-fangled guns were a great institution to a man in such a position.

The game had been won before he had exhausted the magazine of his rifle, so that he was not forced to resort to revolvers.

When he saw that his foes had no longer any semblance of aggressive force, he wheeled his horse and calmly galloped away.

Riding along he filled the magazine of his gun with cartridges from his little pouch, and when this task had been completed Cody felt able to meet another band of hostiles.

He had seen enough of hard fighting, and his one sincere wish was to run across the Boys in Blue as soon as possible.

Those who had been left at bay among the rocks might need help.

An enemy full of trickery and mad with the desire for vengeance surrounded them, and if the shades of another night fell upon them in the same relative positions it would doubtless go hard with those thus penned up.

Soon they must suffer from a scarcity of water, and what could be more terrible?

No wonder Cody was eager to find the border blue-jackets and bring them to the rescue.

By the light of early day he scanned his surroundings, anxious to discover signs of the troops.

No smoke was to be seen lazily rising above the top of some timber patch.

He could not discover men on horseback racing the prairie in frolic.

If the soldiers were near by they knew how to be quiet.

Cody had one satisfaction. He knew his surroundings and if the soldiers were anywhere near the spot he just where he could put his hand on them.

So he headed in the right quarter, and again made for the forks of the river.

This spot was several miles away when the scout suddenly drew up.

Something upon the ground had attracted his attention, and he quickly exclaimed:

"Cavalry passed along here last night. Headed for the forks, and not away from 'em. In luck this time, for sure."

With new life given him, Cody again rode forward following the cavalry trail.

He kept looking ahead, knowing that at any moment now he might see the horse and rider that spoke of the mounted sentinel.

Once he stopped to jump down and examine the ground. He had a little fear that it might prove older than stone, but it pleased him.

To his satisfaction, he found his first surmise was right. The marks had certainly been made during the early part of the preceding night.

After that it was push on again.

He had a canteen of water with him, and some jerked beef.

This served to stay his appetite.

About eight o'clock he sighted a heavy growth of timber, and his heart beat high, for he knew this was the place where the river forked.

It was where he would find the soldiers, unless they had departed.

With considerable anxiety, therefore, he surveyed the timber.

Over the tops of the trees he could see the light smoke of a fire.

His noble horse was wearied, but responded gallantly to his call.

A sound came to his ear.

Often had he heard it in the past, but never with much pleasure as now.

It was the clear bugle call.

As he drew near the trees he saw a sentinel, and saw his hat above his head.

A few minutes later the soldier-scout rode into the camp of the troopers.



cavalrymen immediately surrounded him, and a shower of questions were fired at him.

Seeing Captain Cook just issuing from his tent, he threw himself to the ground, and walked over to the tent, and his story was soon told.

The cavalrymen beckoned to the bugler, and in another moment the latter had sounded:

"Boots and saddles!"

The coming of Buffalo Bill in such haste gave warning that there was work to be done.

Times had been dull of late, the prairie hard-riders welcomed this break in the monotony with great eagerness.

Cavalry companies on the border do not travel with a great amount of camp stuff, and all were ready for a trail.

Buffalo Bill had secured a new mount, but led his own horse, for the animal, after having a rubbing down and a feed, seemed in good condition.

As swift as the arrow flies or the crow sails through the air, he could lead them back to the rocky fort where his comrades stood at bay.

He did not fear that any disaster could have overtaken them unless the allies had, in the interim, received such reinforcements to their ranks as to make them numerically superior.

The ride was kept up during the balance of the morning and without halting for a noon rest.

About four o'clock they were drawing near the region where the rangers held the combined forces of the allies.

The plan of action had all been arranged between the rangers and Buffalo Bill.

They would stop in the timber and rest until near dark.

At the time appointed all were aroused, and the whole party moved forward.

Their pace was quickened when the sound of hot firing was heard ahead.

It was indicated that the allies had once more assaulted the lone fort.

A few times the boom of the little howitzer awoke the echoes among the far-away hills.

It was evident that the besieged were able to give back as they received.

Every man was ready for action, and wild to get in his share.

The din of battle aroused this feeling within their ranks, and they urged their horses on, anxious to arrive at the affair as over.

The moon arose upon the scene of bloodshed, and yet it cast not a dot in the book of strange events that had been

lighted by her rays from the early history of man to the present.

The clear notes of the bugle arose above the fierce sounds of the battle.

The allies heard with a feeling of terror, and lost all desire for further fighting.

From the gallant rangers broke a cheer, and they were seen mounted and rushing from among the rocks, determined to strike the fleeing and demoralized enemy a last blow.

With the rangers on one side and the cavalrymen on the other, the allies were in a bad box.

All thought of organized resistance had left them, and escape was their sole idea.

There were a few isolated cases where some of them turned and fought, but, as a general thing, they simply fled.

The pursuit was not continued long, but many fell beneath the avenging sabres of the border soldiers, who did not often get a chance for business.

Among the dead was found Canada Bill, and Buffalo Bill had killed the notorious halfbreed.

Buffalo Bill had hoped to rid the border of this monster.

Bruce Radway rejoiced in the finding of his sister, who had been captured from a caravan nearly a year before.

He had some satisfaction in seeing the warm friendship between Lizzie and her late companion in captivity, Nina.

The danger through which they had passed had thrown them together, and made them lifelong friends.

Bruce resolved that it would be a pity to separate the girls, so he made a proposition to her of the golden hair that caused her cheeks to turn crimson with joy.

She must have accepted him on the spot, for they were married at the border town, and many of the rangers who had had a share in the wild ride through the land of death under Big-Foot Wallace were present at the affair.

There is little more to add.

The country where these tragic events once occurred has since been opened up to the settler. It is no longer a land of death, but one overflowing with milk and honey.

Perhaps some day the plow may raise strange objects near the old rock fort, and as the settler gazes upon the skull with a round hole in the temple his thoughts will in imagination carry him back to the tragic events that were current upon these broad lands years ago, when over the prairies ranged that prince of borderers, Buffalo Bill, and his gallant bravos.

THE END.

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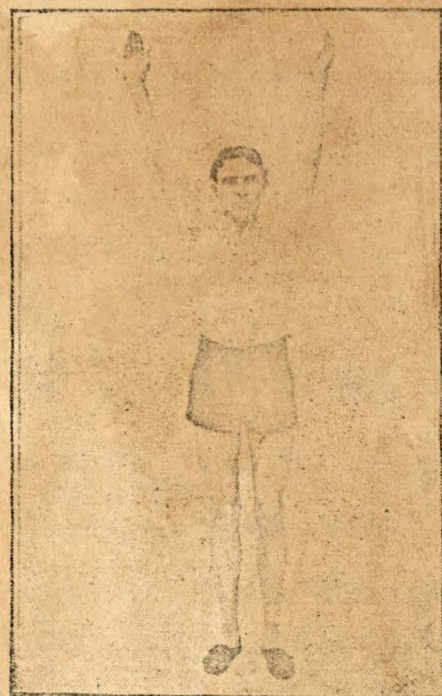
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